JOHN O' LONDON'S LITTLE BOOKS.

"WHAT I THINK"

A SYMPOSIUM ON BOOKS AND OTHER THINGS BY FAMOUS WRITERS OF TO-DAY

EDITED BY
H. GREENHOUGH SMITH
(Editor of "The Strand Magazine")

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NO. 9

"WHAT I THINK"

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

By JOHN O' LONDON

IS IT GOOD ENGLISH?
UNPOSTED LETTERS
TREASURE TROVE
LONDON STORIES

By H. GREENHOUGH SMITH

ODD MOMENTS
STRANGER THAN FICTION

By PROFESSOR J. ARTHUR THOMSON

THE
GOSPEL OF EVOLUTION

By C. LEWIS HIND

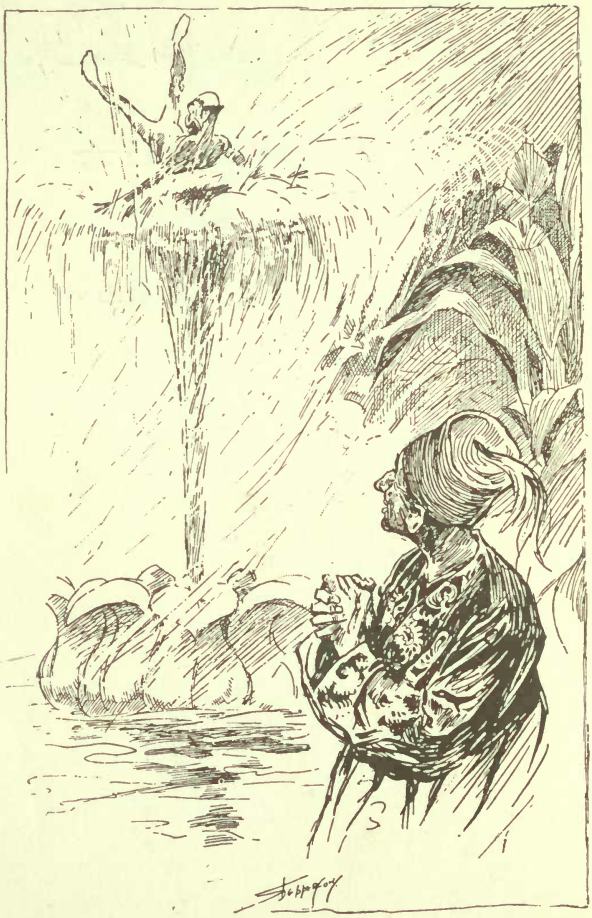
GREAT PAINTERS IN ART
AND LIFE

To Dear Kathleen

From Uncle

Edward Baker

Christmas 1930



"THE PASHA'S PRISONER."

(*See page* 62.)

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INTRODUCTION

THE contents of this volume made their first appearance in the pages of *John o' London's Weekly* and *The Strand Magazine*.

This little volume is unique. It is a volume mainly about books, written, not by critics, but by the far more interesting people who are writing books themselves. They tell you their opinions of the work of the world's master-writers, and they talk to you about their own. They relate their own experience in the realms of letters—they let you sit beside their study-tables—they reveal to you the secrets of their fascinating craft. An unrivalled list of famous authors have combined to make this volume, and its readers will be every man and woman to whom books are a delight.

CONTENTS

"WHAT I THINK"

HOW I WRITE MY BOOKS

BERNARD SHAW.

WHEN I have anything to say that seems worth saying to the public I take a pen or typewriter and write it down and get it published : that is all. I have not to find ideas : they come, and have to be rejected mostly as not bearing examination. Good writing represents the survival of about two per cent. of the notions that present themselves. A glass of champagne or cider will lead to the survival of twenty-five per cent. or more : an author who is not completely sober is, for serious literary purposes, drunk. The quality of the work depends on the thoroughness of the ratiocination to which its inspiration is subjected as or before it is written down, and the care with which it is subsequently corrected. It often takes much longer to revise a page than to write it.

There are two limits to this process. One is the cost, now very formidable, of press corrections, making it advisable to go over the

manuscript or typescript much oftener than in the nineteenth century, when the cost of correction was comparatively negligible. The other is the endurance of the author, whose powers of attention to the same subject become exhausted long before he reaches perfection of statement. Unless circumstances allow the work to be laid aside and reconsidered after a good holiday (and circumstances seldom do) it cannot be carried beyond a point which falls short of completeness.

Some writers do all the work in their heads before they write it down, and revise very little. Others work as they write, and then work over their successive drafts, revising and correcting and modifying and filling in a good deal. Composers do the same : Mozart worked the first way, Beethoven the second. Shakespeare, of whom Jonson said that he never blotted a line, may have deliberately calculated that it was better to go ahead with Macbeth than to waste time (comparatively) in correcting Hamlet ; but the result was that he never argued out his ideas : they are all at loose ends. Some imaginative work will not bear consideration, and would be spoiled by it ; and some inspirations have to be left unreasoned and unexplained. Yet they should

be so left deliberately, not lazily. Normally, the more work you put in, the better the book.

My technical procedure is as follows: I write in shorthand, when and where I can. A great deal of my later work has been written in the train between Hatfield and King's Cross. My secretary transcribes this on the typewriter. When I have gone over the typescript at least twice (sometimes much oftener) it goes to the printer. I revise two successive sets of proofs very carefully, and check the corrections on a third. Then I go to press. In the case of a play I write the dialogue first and then work out the stage business and superimpose it.

All young authors should read Anthony Trollope's "Autobiography," now obtainable in a cheap edition. Many pages of it were written to help them; and it is very good reading as one of the honestest books of the kind ever written, because Trollope had the good sense to omit everything that he knew he could not be honest about.

HUGH WALPOLE.

Your questions are difficult to answer. Because the real purpose of the novel is, as it

seems to me, the creation of human character, it is, I suppose, a human being whom I see first, then others gather round him or her, some point of view of life envelops them, some background evolves behind them, and the fable is provided by the clash of several of these humans against others. It was in that way that " Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill," " The Green Mirror," " The Captives," " The Cathedral," and my new novel, " The Old Ladies," came to me. A book is always in my head a year or more before I begin to write it. My books are all connected together in my mind, making for me a world of their own ; the reason, I suppose, why my characters move from one book to another, a most inartistic proceeding, I'm told. But life seems to me more important than art, although art is a heaven-sent and glorious luxury. But all the great characters in fiction—Tom Jones, Anna Karenina, Emma Bovary, Raskolnikoff, Lord Jim, Elizabeth Bennett—are life first and art afterwards.

Create one character like Jeanie Deans or Turgénieff's Liza and you may die happy. Scott was no conscious artist at all ; Turgénieff was nothing else. They both achieved the one thing necessary for their job.

I write for my own pleasure and amusement. I'm afraid that I enjoy novel-writing immensely. I say " afraid " because novelists must sweat blood and tears, it seems. I would if I could, but I can't.

F. BRITTEN AUSTIN.

How does a story-writer do his work ? By *hard* work. Once in a very long while (I speak for myself) a theme spontaneously presents itself, beautiful, full-fledged, and complete. But these are the angels' visits. Normally, I at least get a workable idea only after long searching for it, a process that may take hours, days, or even weeks. On the average, I have considered and rejected some scores of potential plots before I find the one that seems to " come alive " as I contemplate it.

Many writers make a skeleton synopsis of the story before commencing to write it. For me, that would kill it. But I make quite sure that I have the whole thing complete in my head before sitting down to write the first word. Once the whole story is fully outlined and concrete to one's imagination, the actual writing is comparatively easy. If it is a really good idea, it seems to write itself.

Personally, I aim at the greatest possible precision of word and at a definitely conceived structure. I like a story to march logically and swiftly from an opening note to a climax, and resolve rapidly from that climax to a last word that is all the better if it can, in some way, echo the note of the first. There should, of course, be no word in it that does not capture the reader's instinctive sense that it is vitally germane to the matter.

In description I try to stimulate the reader's own visual imagination, if possible, to such a degree of vividness that he feels he is actually present at the scene. If I can do that, I am sure of his interest—and if I have got that I feel I have done my job. But I often write and rewrite a story four or five times before I am satisfied that I cannot present it more dramatically and effectively—i.e., more *interestingly*.

Personally, I do not dictate. The spoken word, in my case, tends to lose expression, and my aim is always at the maximum of concentration. I write out every work by hand in a rough draft, worked over again and again, and then I type it, putting the whole story once more " through the sieve," and often very materially altering it as I go

on. The final result is that the Editor does not like the story you believe to be your masterpiece !

H. DE VERE STACPOOLE.

I don't know how stories come to one. I expect the subliminal mind starts the business. I know it helps in the finishing. In my experience it is a great mistake to plan a story in too minute detail ; get the essential skeleton and everything else will come, or ought to come, for the mind that works in the dark.

I believe all characters and most scenes that are any good come from the cellars of the mind ; a character may be drawn from a living human being, but it is no good till it has gone below and received vitality and additions from the gnomes who are responsible for the dreams of man.

I never dictate or use a typewriter. I can no more imagine a writer dictating a book than I can imagine a painter dictating a picture. I can't, somehow, imagine a man writing a book with his tongue—at least, a book worth reading.

I like chapter headings, and of all the minor arts chapter heading is the most difficult. The

chapter headings of a novel ought to suggest, and tickle the reader's imagination, not make bald and atrocious statements, such, for instance, as " Jane Intervenes."

BARONESS VON HUTTEN.

" How would such and such a character develop in such and such conditions ? "

This question, quite free from any idea of plot, or social or moral conditions, is the root of all my novels.

Pam was simply the clever and sensitive child of selfishly devoted lovers, and, that much settled, she did what she liked with me.

So did Sandy Sharrow, with his inherited taste for brandy, and his passion for the old house of his fathers ; so did that unselfish little penny-a-liner Violet Walbridge, in " Happy House," once I had surrounded her with her insensitive, condescending, greedy family. (Violet was not, as Sir W. Robertson Nicoll believed, drawn from a living novelist.) In " Mothers-in-Law," it amused me to contrast an American and a Latin mother, each passionately devoted to her child, each bound by her own nationality and heredity, and utterly unable to understand each other. The

other characters in the book, and what there is of plot, came in such a way that I can hardly be blamed for them.

And now I have set Julia Vine-Innes—England is full of Julias—into an unusual hereditary and social environment, and let her struggle as best she could.

I work on a book for nearly a year, but the actual dictation or writing takes me about three weeks. This is, of course, regrettable, but it is for me an utter impossibility to write slowly.

I like writing more than anything in the world, and only wish people enjoyed reading my books as much as I enjoy writing them.

As to a typewriting machine, I'd as soon have a motor-bike, noise, vibration, stench, and all, in my study.

No. For me, " a clean sheet, a flowing pen, and thoughts that follow fast."

REBECCA WEST.

I do not know how I write my books, except that I write them on six writing pads at once. I write the rough draft of a page on the first page of a pad ; then on the second I write the rough draft of a paragraph ; then on the

third I write the rough draft of a sentence; on the fourth and fifth I write the sentence more and more desperately; on the sixth I write the fair copy. People who do not otherwise admire my work tell me that this performance, particularly when carried on at a high speed, reminds them of Cinquevalli.

As regards the plot of the book, I think out a very elaborate plot for my books and short stories, complete from the first word to the last; I usually find at the end of the story that not one atom of this plot has survived. The characters take the story in charge. How one gets them I do not know; they come to one out of anywhere. I can't imagine taking a character from real life, unless one wishes to indulge in the pleasures of libel.

MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES.

The imagination—that is, the part of the brain which creates character and which weaves plots—remains an entire mystery, though the subject has proved sufficiently interesting to raise a considerable literature in most civilized countries. Some time ago I had an interesting talk with Mr. Walter De La Mare concerning this very question, and we both agreed that

the creative gift can neither be analysed nor explained. To my mind one of the greatest imaginative efforts of our time is " The Memoirs of a Midget," and I asked Mr. De La Mare what had led to his first inception of his heroine. His answer, which I am sure was a scrupulously true one, seemed to me a quite inadequate explanation of the genesis of that wonderful book.

Valuable as a plot mind may be to its owner, the possession of a creative gift means that there drifts from somewhere—no one knows from where or why—not a plot, but a series of characters, or perhaps more often a strong central character imbued not only with life, but with all the attributes which go to compose a human being. Now and again a writer can look back and say : " So-and-so made me think of writing so-and-so," but that is rare rather than usual.

In my own case I do know that the genesis of " The Lodger "—in some ways my best-known book—was owing to a chance sentence overheard at a dinner party which ran somewhat like this : " I know an old couple who believe that they had for a short time Jack the Ripper as lodger." I first wrote the tale as a short story, covering one dramatic incident.

Then, when I was asked to write a serial for *The Daily Telegraph*, I told myself that my short story would make a novel, this partly because if I write a short story I always feel I know all about the characters' pasts and future. But I repeat that with me, at any rate, what happened in the case of "The Lodger" was an exception. As a rule I have no idea why a series of characters, connected with a well-defined plot, suddenly drifts into my mind and finds there secure lodgment.

As to the working out of character and plot into a book, it is a mystery to me how this is achieved. For myself, I have very, very rarely made out any kind of synopsis, and when I have done so I have never remained true to it. Imaginary characters, if filled with the breath of life, invariably run away with their creator, and do what they choose to do. Even so, I fully admit the value, almost the necessity, of some sort of framework. I cannot even conceive the state of mind of the novelist who can say: "I have no idea when I begin a story how it is going to end." To my mind every novel, as well as every short story, should have a real framework, even if it only exists, as in my case, in the mind of the writer.

W. PETT RIDGE.

I disclaim any ability to teach the young or to give useful hints to the old. Before starting to write a story I set down a group of characters with their names, ages, and occupations. Then comes the planning of about twenty chapters, and not until that is done do I begin to write. For me the old-fashioned nib does the recording work, from beginning to finish.

GILBERT FRANKAU.

You ask me to tell you in a few words how I conceive and write a novel. As far as the conception goes, I am afraid I can tell you very little. My stories come to me in many different ways, but the first step is always one of inspiration. The original idea of " Life —and Erica," for instance, came to me through seeing a girl in a tea-shop. " Gerald Cranston's Lady " had its first origin in a newspaper report which announced the flight of a famous financier in an aeroplane to Paris, with his inamorata.

From such slight origins as these, inspiration —if I may still use the term—develops. Having visualized my central character or my principal situation, my imagination carries on—visualiz-

ing new characters, new situations, and the whole rough nucleus of the story I wish to tell.

For in my humble view the main, and practically the only, duty of a novelist is story-telling. And it is for this reason that, once I have the rough nucleus of my tale, I dictate it rapidly to my secretary and thereafter proceed along perfectly set lines of what I can only describe as " constructional technique."

About this constructional technique I can tell you a good deal. I start, as I have said, with a rough nucleus of my story set out in about five thousand words. This done, I devote two, three, and sometimes six months to drafting out the exact scenario, in which all characters and all scenes are set out in their proper sequence, and allotted an appropriate number of words, according to their importance.

But it is only after this scenario is really finished that what I call my real work commences. My habits then are simple, business-like, and, I believe, efficient. Every morning at ten o'clock I start work and carry on till one, resuming again at five and carrying on till seven. All this time I dictate, with my original scenario in front of me ; not particularly

caring about style, but devoting myself mainly to incident and characterization. I carry on with dictation in this way either until I have finished a chapter or until inspiration (*for, after all, the whole thing, though one likes to consider it an intellectual process, is really a matter of inspiration backed by technique*) peters out. Then, and then only, do I commence my final polish, which is done with the pen in between and across the typed script of my final dictation.

All of which, I am afraid, will sound rather like the conjurer explaining his tricks to a baffled audience, but may serve some slight purpose for those who also wish to become conjurers.

ARNOLD BENNETT.

For many years Mr. Arnold Bennett used to have regular hours of work, but now is no longer a creature of habit in this respect. However, most of his work is done in the morning, though he never begins until eight o'clock at the earliest, whereas in the old days he would begin at six or six-thirty, or even five-thirty. He rarely works in the afternoon except under pressure of business, and never in

any circumstances in the evening. He never writes fiction or articles twice over.

Mr. Bennett gets most of his ideas walking about the streets, and he does not sit down to write until he knows fairly exactly what he is going to say, and he scarcely ever makes any alterations. In the case of plays, however, he usually writes his stuff twice over, as he finds it impossible to fit together all the bits of dialogue at the first try. Plays have to be altered and altered ; that is his experience. Indeed, they are never done until the curtain goes up on the first performance. This does not mean that he will materially alter the structure of a play. No ! But he will alter details endlessly.

Mr. Bennett has two styles of handwriting—one rather ordinary for articles, essays, etc., and another rather extraordinary for novels, short stories, etc.—but both kinds are very small and quite different from the styles in which he writes letters. He never dictates anything—not even a letter. As regards correspondence, he finds it much easier to write letters in shorthand, by means of which for a number of years he earned his living forty years ago. His secretary then transcribes the shorthand note. " What beautiful shorthand you write ! " said another secretary to Mr. Bennett's secretary in a certain

office during the war. " That is Mr. Bennett's shorthand," his secretary replied. He is very proud of this unsolicited testimonial.

GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM.

I always have the greatest difficulty in beginning, and the first three or four chapters often have to be written seven or eight times before I really get started. After that I write fairly rapidly, usually about five thousand words a day, until I get the thing finished. Then I go all over it again, erasing and re-writing. Finally I dictate to a typist, making merely verbal alterations as I go.

Plots are usually suggested to me by places or scenes. It seems to me as if certain things ought to happen in certain places, and my story is the history of such happenings. An island or two off the coast of Connaught suggested to me " Spanish Gold." The railway station of an Irish country town suggested " The Lost Lawyer." The dining-room of the Ritz Hotel in Budapest suggested " The Grand Duchess."

Characters more or less grow of themselves, and it is very rarely that I have taken traits and characteristics from people whom I have actually met.

I suppose, in reality, that any character in a book which has any vitality about it is a portrait of some side of the author himself, and that one does not get down on paper anything except what one is, or at all events might be.

SIR PHILIP GIBBS.

I suppose my journalistic training has governed my method as a writer of fiction. When I get hold of something remotely resembling an idea I write it as though the printers were waiting for my copy to catch the early edition. Not for me is that mystic luxury known as waiting for inspiration.

I have none of those sensibilities which cause irritation and anguish sometimes to more exalted and delicate souls. Noise matters nothing to me. Piano organs may play in my neighbourhood, people may laugh, dance, or quarrel in the room where I work, but I go on writing, indifferent to the world about me. I can write fiction in the corner of a third-class carriage, or with my elbow on a *café* table, or sitting on a haystack, just as I used to write descriptive articles in any place and at any time in the most uncomfortable conditions.

But whereas in journalism one has one's

subject set for one, in writing fiction one has to search for it beforehand, and I find that very difficult. To invent a plot seems to me the hardest thing in the world. I have never yet succeeded in producing one. Life does not work out in plots nicely constructed with a surprise at the end, according to the best recipes of short-story writing, and most of my attempts at plot are really elaborated reports of certain phases of life which I have observed.

When I want to think out a short story I always start with a place. Then I think of the types of people I have met in that place and the problems or passions in which they are involved. Generally some particular character whom I happened to meet suggests himself or herself as a person who would be involved most sharply in the drama of that town or country. He or she would be in inevitable conflict with dominant prejudices, or the political situation, or the private passions of family or class, or the ideas of the time and people. It is this idea of conflict in ideas which gives me my clue to a narrative, and when once I have worked out that I find the rest easy, and begin my report of the case, which builds up in detail and description very much as though I were recording some chapter of contemporary

history which I had investigated for a newspaper.

Critics say they are not short stories. I agree. No short story ought to be more than four thousand words in length. I find that I want nine or ten thousand before I begin to feel that my tale is told, and I only end there because there is a limit to the patience of readers and the space of editors. My novels are continuations of my attempts to write short stories. There is no reason why they should ever end—some people would say there is no reason why they should ever begin—except that I should die of nicotine poisoning unless I finished after a hundred and fifty thousand words. For I cannot work without smoking cigarettes.

JOHN GALSWORTHY.

Perhaps I can say that the main drifts of character and plot come to me spasmodically at odd moments in the silent watches. As to detail, it washes up from, I suppose, the subconscious into the conscious and blank mind of one sitting solitary and diligent in a chair. I never make scenarios, I do not write with a stylo, and I do not dictate.

THOMAS BURKE.

I am not conscious of having any method of work. I do not look for scenes or character or ideas. They come unsought, from the accumulated memories of years, and they arrange themselves without any help from me. I hate desk work, and do very little of it, except the typewriting of the final version.

I have heard of men who sat down with a pad of paper and wrote a story or an essay or a chapter straight away, line by line, from the first sentence to the last; but I have never been able to work like this. I write wherever I happen to be, when the idea comes, sometimes on the staircase, sometimes in the bathroom; and I write on any scraps of paper available, and put it into form on the typewriter.

I. A. R. WYLIE.

It is very difficult to say how my ideas come. The best come in a flash from nowhere—or, perhaps, from something in conversation—and lie tucked away in a kind of mental incubator until they hatch out in a complete state. Very rarely an idea is given me, and even then it is scarcely recognizable by the time I have made

it my own. Most of my stories are concerned with some conflict or problem, so that I make my story first, as it were, and then create characters to get the situation.

I ought, perhaps, to add that as conflicts and problems are very often the result of certain characters, I do not always begin with the plot. What I mean to convey is that my main interest is with the conflicts that arise in life. As to the actual writing, I write in longhand and have a horror both of typewriters and dictation. For one thing, I write very slowly, and for another, I have a real love for the feel of good paper and a smooth-running pen.

RAFAEL SABATINI.

I find a certain difficulty in answering your main question on how I do my work, because, to be perfectly frank, I don't know. I am conscious of no law governing my work, and still less of any formula by which it is performed.

The assembling of ideas is with me at least as much the result of chance as of any deliberate design. Nor does the process by any means always follow the same course. Sometimes I

begin by conceiving a situation, sometimes a single character, and sometimes I am attracted by a particular background.

Given any of these starting-points, the rest is comparatively easy. In one instance I began by fastening upon a title, "Scaramouche," and almost simultaneously came the phrase descriptive of the character: "He was born with the gift of laughter and a sense that the world was mad." That supplied the opening line and the keynote of the book. With so much in hand, the setting readily suggested itself. How the actual story came I do not know. But the seed and the soil were found, and the rest followed somehow. I do not suppose I could be more definite about the genesis of any other book of mine.

But it must not be understood from this that I find the writing of books an easy task, which has a way of accomplishing itself. It is not. Usually I work very hard indeed, carrying my preliminary researches into all manner of bypaths and accumulating perhaps ten times more knowledge of the epoch I am treating than I ever need to display in the course of my narrative. Commonly I destroy a great deal of what I write. I do this whenever I feel that the attack is wrong, or discover that a

better attack will be possible. But I make few alterations in what I actually write.

I am utterly incapable of dictating. That is, and always would be, a barrier to the complete absorption and concentration at which I aim, and which I find it possible to reach only by actual writing. In fact, I am one of those possibly unfortunate persons who communicate their ideas only at the point of the pen.

IAN HAY

I write with great difficulty, and increasing years do not seem to make me any more facile. I do not suppose I have ever published a sentence just as it was originally written; most of them were not even grammatical to begin with. It is only by constant pruning and elimination that I can get any results at all.

As for the plot—the imaginative part of the work—I have always held that there is no such thing as literary imagination. You simply can't produce something from nothing. Can any author lay his hand on his heart and declare that when he wants to write a story he simply sits down, makes his mind nice and smooth and blank—like a freshly raked flower-bed—

closes his eyes, and waits, until presently a new idea comes pushing its way up to the surface like a mushroom ?

I defy him to make any such statement, because ideas do not come into existence through spontaneous conception. They are engendered by contact with some outside agency, some casual incident in one's own daily life, some idle remark let fall in the course of a conversation, some episode witnessed in the street, an odd paragraph in a newspaper, or a chance encounter with some individual of whom you suddenly say to yourself, " I wonder how that man would act in such and such a situation ? " The idea thus engendered is sometimes a very tiny one, the merest germ ; but it sets you going. Sometimes it disappears entirely as the story progresses. Still, without it you could never have started at all. Therefore literary imagination seems to me to be summed up in the word Observation.

When you say that an author has an original mind or a great fund of imagination, all you really mean is that he has the gift of recognizing an idea the moment he sees it and making the utmost of its possibilities. I can turn to most of my published works and put my finger on some obscure little episode and say :

" That really happened, and it started this story."

EDGAR JEPSON.

I never sit down to think of a short story ; if they do not come of themselves, they do not come to me at all. They come from all kinds of things : from an experience, an incident, a person seen, a character imagined, from a casual remark, an interesting object. One of the best short stories I have written of recent years—at least I had letters praising it from places hundreds and thousands of miles apart—was suggested by a girl's face under a red hat at a lecture I was delivering.

The short story that comes out of my own experience does not seem to come till years after that experience—" emotion remembered in tranquillity," I suppose. If I think of an out-of-the-way character, he or she will often prove a mine of short stories. It comes of my being interested only in what Henley called " companions of the will," persons, that is, who are significant manifestations of the Life Force, and not in rotters. Round such persons, young or old, male or female, incidents, mostly adventurous, naturally gather.

Also other short-story writers have quite unknowingly given me short stories. One of them, just back from the war, said to me: "I often feel that I should like to have a meal in comfort on the floor." He could never have seen a short story in the desire; I could. Another said to me: "I've just been talking to a millionaire, and he was complaining that he could never get a decent steak in his own house." He could never have seen a short story in the complaint; I could. But then I write a different kind of short story. Lately I have been writing short stories about some of my Oriental objects of art, a Japanese sword-guard, pieces of jade. They seem to stir my fancy; and adventures gather round them.

I never work out the plot of a short story before beginning to write it. I begin it and let it build itself up. It seems the best way of writing the kind of short story I write. But then I do not start on the story directly the idea comes to me; I let it simmer. Perhaps if I did work out the plot I should write them more quickly.

It usually takes me from a fortnight to three weeks to write a short story, and as a rule I dictate them. My novels, also, are mostly dictated. It does not make my hand ache.

MARJORIE BOWEN.

I seldom, if ever, know definitely how a main theme will evolve itself. After it has been roughly composed the characters are visualized, and the actions of these characters invariably create minor themes in themselves. Then colour, atmosphere, etc., are applied to emphasize or diminish the character, the theme, or the incident, according to their proportions or types.

Every word I have ever published has been written with my own hand, and an ordinary pen, on ordinary ruled foolscap. I am rarely at a loss for a new idea, and my work flows easily, once the story has commenced, until it is ended. I can always throw myself, as it were, into any situation or period that I happen to be engaged upon.

I work on an average three to four hours a day, and I am little affected by annoyances and irritations around me. This may be due to application and to a certain power for existing in my characters and places, without much feeling as to my surroundings at the moment.

I dislike intensely to re-read my MSS. or to have them read to me. During the writing of a novel I exist, to the finish, with the

characters and actions, spiritually perhaps. After its completion I feel a slight depression, as if I have left real people with whom I have been living.

COMPTON MACKENZIE.

The conception of and preliminary work on a book are likely to be different every time, and it would be idle in a short space to discuss that side of the business.

The actual process of writing varies according to the pressure under which I am doing my work, but it usually takes me many hours to produce comparatively few words. When I am working hard, which is for eleven months of the year, I like to get into my chair as soon after five o'clock in the afternoon as possible, for, suffering as I do from sciatica, I can only work in one of those invalid chairs the perfect type of which, for a writer, has not yet been invented. The gramophone plays the whole time, and at eight o'clock I have dinner alone ; at nine I get back into my chair, and the gramophone plays till eleven. From eleven till half-past one the pianola plays, and I go to bed about two, thankful indeed if I have produced fifteen hundred words.

I usually read for another hour in bed, preferably a murder trial or a book of voyages. I sleep till about midday, eat no lunch, and take scarcely any exercise, for I have found that the less exercise I take when I am working the better I am, and for me the perfect form of exercise is ferreting and shooting rabbits. But when I am working really hard, which is, roughly, when I reach the second half of every book I write, I do not interrupt my evening with dinner, and do not stop working until four or five o'clock, or even six and seven in the morning. Then I eat a lot of bread and cheese, drink plenty of beer, and perhaps walk round the island[1] if the sun is shining, after which I sleep till two or three in the afternoon.

I have tried dictating to relieve the strain of sitting so long in a chair, or when I have been ill in bed, which in the years just after the war was unfortunately very often; but I found that it made my writing glib and rhetorical, so I gave it up. I envy the exquisite complicacy of Henry James's dictated style and the equally exquisite simplicity of Mr. George Moore's, both of which were achieved by dictation.

[1] Jethou—one of the Channel Islands.

When I once get into the rhythm of hard work, I have produced about three thousand words in twelve hours, and in the case of " The Heavenly Ladder " I produced as much nightly for a month at a stretch. One of my chief difficulties is to hammer the Latinity out of my style. I wrote tolerable Latin prose long before I could write anything at all like English, and even to this day as soon as I take up a pen the first form of every sentence of narrative is Latin. Mercifully I can write dialogue as fast as many people can speak it, and dialogue is the swing on which I pick up what I lose on the roundabout of narrative.

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

When I am asked what my system of work is I have to ask myself what form of work is referred to. I have wandered into many fields. There are few in which I have not nibbled. I have written between twenty and thirty works of fiction, the histories of two wars, several books of psychic science, three books of travel, one book on literature, several plays, two books of criminal studies, two political pamphlets, three books of verses, one book on children, and an autobiography. For better,

for worse, I do not think many men have had a wider sweep.

In short stories it has always seemed to me that so long as you produce your dramatic effect, accuracy of detail matters little. I have never striven for it and have made some bad mistakes in consequence. What matter if I can hold my readers ? I claim that I may make my own conditions, and I do so. I have taken liberties in some of the Sherlock Holmes stories. I have been told, for example, that in " The Adventure of Silver Blaze," half the characters would have been in jail and the other half warned off the Turf for ever. That does not trouble me in the least when the story is admittedly a fantasy.

It is otherwise where history is brought in. Even in a short story one should be accurate there. In the Brigadier Gerard stories, for example, even the uniforms are correct. Twenty books of Napoleonic soldier records are the foundation of those stories.

This accuracy applies far more to a long historical novel. It becomes a mere boy's book of adventure unless it is a correct picture of the age. My system before writing such a book as " Sir Nigel " or " The Refugees " was to read everything I could get about the age

and to copy out into notebooks all that seemed distinctive. I would then cross-index this material by dividing it under the heads of the various types of character. Thus under Archer I would put all archery lore, and also what oaths an archer might use, where he might have been, what wars, etc., so as to make atmosphere in his talk. Under Monk I would have all about stained glass, illumination of missals, discipline, ritual, and so on. In this way if I had, for example, a conversation between a falconer and an armourer, I could make each draw similes from his own craft. All this seems wasted so far as the ephemeral criticism of the day goes, but it is the salt, none the less, which keeps the book from decay. It is in this that Sir Walter Scott is so supreme. I have been reading him again lately, and his work compares to ours as the front of the British Museum to the front of a stuccoed picture palace.

As to my hours of work, when I am keen on a book I am prepared to work all day, with an hour or two of walk or siesta in the afternoon. As I grow older I lose some power of sustained effort, but I remember that I once did ten thousand words of " The Refugees " in twenty-four hours. It was the part where

the Grand Monarch was between his two mistresses, and contains as sustained an effort as I have ever made. Twice I have written forty-thousand-word pamphlets in a week, but in each case I was sustained by a burning indignation, which is the best of all driving power.

From the time that I no longer had to write for sustenance I have never considered money in my work. When the work is done the money is very welcome, and it is the author who should have it. But I have never accepted a contract because it was well paid, and indeed I have very seldom accepted a contract at all, preferring to wait until I had some idea which stimulated me, and not letting my agent or editor know until I was well advanced with the work. I am sure that this is the best and also the happiest procedure for an author.

P. G. WODEHOUSE.

In the matter of plots, I find that I use, for short stories, a method exactly opposite to the one which gets me my best results in the case of novels—if in these earnest days I can apply such a dignified name to my longer yarns.

When I want to write a short story, I sit

down on one chair, place the feet comfortably on another, put notebook, pencil, matches, pipe, and tobacco handily on my lap, select a character, and then keep on sitting till I have discovered what happened to him the time he forgot his wife's birthday or on the afternoon when he went to Wembley. In other words, the story grows out of the character. It may turn into an entirely different story half-way through, but the character remains the same.

A novel is another matter altogether, far less simple, and it is to the strain of getting plots for novels that I attribute the hideous, lined face and bald head which appear in my photographs.

A good novel ought to have a theme, so I start by trying to think of one. Failing in this, I dig up a scene—any scene, so long as it seems to have possibilities. I then take the actors in the scene and try to learn more about them. Then I think of other scenes, bung them down on a bit of paper, and pin this bit of paper to the first bit of paper. This goes on for about a week, by which time my drawer contains perhaps ten bits of paper, carefully pinned together and scrawled over with the sort of thing the fever-patient moans in his sleep.

Then, just as I am beginning to feel that nothing will emerge from this chaos, scene number fifteen suddenly clicks with scene number eight. I join them and write them down on another bit of paper. And then, when I am shaving or in my bath, it occurs to me that by turning the blackmailer into a dog-fancier and giving the girl an aunt who keeps rabbits, and eliminating the curate in favour of a pickle-manufacturer from Milwaukee, I have got a faint, shadowy suggestion of a plot.

At this point I really get going. I stand no nonsense from my characters. The pickle-manufacturer has to become a dowager duchess —and like it—in order to fit the scene where the dog-fancier (now a blackmailer once more) goes to the Hunt Ball so as to keep in with the girl's aunt, whose rabbits have been taken away from her and replaced by a racing-stable.

The final stage begins when one or two characters who can't be altered creep into the story. Then I know where I am.

As regards characters, some of those which have appeared in my stories have come from chance remarks from friends about men they have known. Years ago a cousin of mine told me that he was at Winchester with a long,

thin, solemn, immaculately-dressed boy who used to wear an eyeglass and talk kindly, but not patronizingly, to the head master. The character, Psmith, who has appeared in several of my books, was based on my idea of that youth, whom I never met. Ukridge was a friend of W. Townend, the writer of sea-stories, who told me about him. Jeeves was an invention of my own. I was in the middle of a short story, when it suddenly struck me that a young man of my hero's mental calibre could not possibly have thought out the solution of the problem in which a friend of his was involved, and it seemed to me that a super-intelligent valet would just meet the case.

When it comes to the actual writing of a story, I always work on the typewriter. I have never tried dictation.

ROBERT HICHENS.

When Mr. Hichens writes a book he starts at the beginning and works on steadily till he comes to the end. He is not at all an erratic worker. Usually, in fact almost every day, he begins work immediately after an early breakfast and goes on for three, three and a half, or four hours. When he is settled down at home

he very often writes again between tea and dinner. Recently, when he was for two months on the Riviera, he worked on till about ten o'clock at night and never came down to dinner, but as a rule he stops about seven-thirty.

He does not write very fast and he never writes out of doors. He likes to be enclosed and not to have a strong light in his room when he is at work. He does not make any skeleton of the book before he begins it, and he takes very few notes. Once he did take a quantity of notes. This was for " The Garden of Allah." He took definite notes in the Trappist monastery of Staoueh in Algeria. Then he brought them home and left them in a cab in London and never found them ! Of course he takes mental notes, and sometimes he takes a few written notes of scenery.

Mr. Hichens tries to work carefully so that he may not have to rewrite, but it has sometimes happened that he has been forced either to rewrite or to cut out whole passages. In his book " In the Wilderness," for instance, he discarded at least sixty thousand words. He never dictates or typewrites, but writes everything with a pen. He always has some work on hand. Since he finished his newest novel, " After the Verdict," he has done a great deal

of work on a slightly shorter story. When it is finished he means to give three months to the writing of short stories. He never rushes to things, but works slowly, and there are not many days when he does not do some work.

"SAPPER."

What an appalling question to hold at the head of a man who has never wittingly done you any harm! However, I will do my best to answer.

(1) The coming of ideas. They don't, and when they do I generally find they have been used before.

(2) The working out of characters and plots. In this I am not my own master. I am completely in the hands of the unscrupulous people who force their way on to my paper, and who insist on doing things which I regard as most reprehensible.

(3) I cannot dictate. My unfortunate typist says that I cannot write either.

PERCEVAL GIBBON.

Twice I have been asked, within the last year, to lecture upon "the art of the short

story " ; and I have in each case declined. Because I know nothing about it. For me, a short story is what Edward Garnett called it (as quoted by H. G. Wells : I have not the text by me)—an anecdote. Its ingredients are chiefly a piece of effective, or markedly ineffective, action wherein distinctive characters play their parts against a background of scenery which ought properly to be essential to the whole thing.

I would gladly oblige would-be short-story writers with advice as to how and when to write ; but the best I can do for them is to tell them how I do it myself. I make my plots by hand, as it were. I walk the roads, and walk my garden, chewing them over until they sicken me to the point where I have to get them out of my system by writing them.

There is no difficulty about plots ; anybody can make a plot of sorts in ten minutes. Whether he can then present it in acceptable form is another matter ; for form is, after all, the essence, the right to exist, and the sole justification of the short story.

Joseph Conrad told me that one ought to know one's slightest character so well that it " blazed at one like a fiery dragon." And he was right, of course ; he always was ! And

that, I think, is the trick of the trade; you must *live* your stuff—eat it, drink it, sleep with it, wake with it, suffer with it, and die with it. Only so can your stories have a genuine existence. Otherwise it is better to hire somebody—me, for example—to write them for you.

W. J. LOCKE.

I don't know that there is much to be said about my work. I hit upon a central idea, worry round it, invent characters to develop it, and as soon as I've got a rough and ready scheme I start in to write.

I always write at night. Odds and ends of mechanical work such as correcting MS., typescript, or proofs I do at any old time during the day—but all my work of composition is done from nine-thirty onwards. I compose rather slowly, and nine hundred words I regard as a good day's work.

From my writing table in my library I look straight out over the tops of palm trees, at the Mediterranean and the bastioned prison of the Man in the Iron Mask on the Ile Ste. Marguerite, and the bluest of blue skies. It sounds ideal for a writer, but as I mostly sit at the

table at night, the view doesn't matter. At present the windows are wide open and the moon looks in on me and moths come in and fool round the lamps.

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM.

I write nothing by hand nowadays except an occasional article when travelling. The whole of my fiction I dictate to my secretary, who occasionally takes it on to the typewriter direct, but more frequently into a shorthand notebook. I then re-dictate from the written sheets, an occupation which takes far more time and is more laborious than giving shape to the first conception of the story. Practically I work the whole of the time out of doors.

As regards the assembling of the ideas necessary to produce a work of fiction, I have, perhaps, during the last dozen years somewhat changed my methods. In earlier days I was accustomed to evolve a plot and story first, and then create the characters afterwards. To-day I more frequently evolve from my mind what I conceive to be an interesting character, or characters, and one central situation. In other words, my characters to-day

interest me more than the scenes in which they move.

My plots, stories, and incidents, such as they may be, come to me without effort. My greatest difficulty is to render the feminine interest in my stories adequate, possibly because I know so much less about the other sex. The feminine character as a whole seems, even in these days of greater freedom, to conform to type and shows less variability than the masculine.

A. E. W. MASON.

I cannot give you a fixed rule as to how a book begins with me. Sometimes it is a character, sometimes a combination of people in a particular relationship, sometimes an idea not as yet personified, which I have come upon and taken note of. Or again it may be some story which has been told to me. But usually I start with certain people and certain facts connected with them ; and these remain simmering in my head for some years before I ever make use of them.

For instance, " At the Villa Rose," which was published in *The Strand*, began one evening when I was dining at the Star and

Garter Hotel at Richmond. The names of Mme. Fougère, the victim of the real Aix crime, and her companion who was one of the accomplices, were cut by a diamond ring in the glass of the window. A year or two later a case heard at the Old Bailey, where a good deal hung upon a door which was first found shut, then open, then shut again, contributed something more, and gradually the story took shape.

Similarly with " The House of the Arrow," my last book, in which Hanaud, the French detective, once more appears. A story of a false accusation was told to me. Then came the case in France of a whole district being utterly disturbed for months by anonymous letters which were subsequently traced to a young girl. There was a more or less similar plague of such letters which continued for years at a little town of the South Coast ; and the problem of the young girl in educated surroundings who took to that particular aberration took hold of me. Thus those two books.

" The Four Feathers," on the other hand, came just from the idea which is the kernel of the book—the fear of fear carried to the point of disgrace, with the subsequent realization

that the highly-strung once put to it will go farther than the rest.

As to methods, I never begin until I know the end and most of the middle—though the middle will alter as the characters carry the story along. Then I write it and rewrite it —always twice and much of it three times, for I like an economy of words, and very likely practise it too much.

SIR GILBERT PARKER.

My methods are quite simple. To me character is everything, and from character comes the plot. Sometimes, as in the case of Charlie Steele in " The Right of Way," characters have been in my mind for a quarter of a century, and at last they take form and live their own lives through my pen.

The book by which I first made my name as a writer of fiction, " Pierre and His People," had for its chief character Pierre, the son of a French gentleman and an Indian squaw, whom I had known as a boy. I used him at last. I do not say that I draw my characters absolutely from life, but they are suggested from life. I have written a number of historical novels, and I am writing one now.

The main character in " The Seats of the Mighty " was taken from the life of Major Robert Stobo, who was a Scottish prisoner in Quebec at the time of the capture of the province. The chief character in " The Battle of the Strong," an historical Jersey novel, was taken from the life of a British admiral who became a Continental Prince. The present central character has the same historical accuracy, and he—as they all have been—is as real to me as though I knew him.

The first page of a book is always most difficult, but if you have got that right the rest falls into place, and so it becomes the one true starting-point of the book.

I have gone for two months with my story clear in my mind waiting for the first sentence. I was thinking out the story of " No Defence " at Buxton, and had it clear in my mind, but was waiting for the first page. I was sitting on a hillside when a young Irishman moved down it, from two others ; and a stone rattled impudently after him. He turned round and said with a grin : " I'll meet you at the assizes, and after that in jail." As that struck the note I wanted, I used it with a difference.

As for working, I never do so at night, but in the morning. Habit is a great thing.

I do not dictate. I suppose of all the books I have written, not more than seven chapters have been dictated, and they only when my arm was lame. I do not dictate because it is impossible to get the same deep concentration which one gets with the pen or pencil in one's hand. I am speaking for myself only. Others can do it—and successfully. I have not been able.

A. S. M. HUTCHINSON.

When I try to analyse how my books come to me, I find the process as mysterious as certainly it must sound to those who read this attempt at explanation. So far as, on examining myself, I can find out, the thing begins with a character which interests me. The character persists in my mind until I find myself knowing everything about him or her, and during the process other characters arise about him. When I get to that stage, which frequently is, off and on, as much as two years, I begin to realize that a novel is going to happen out of these people.

How it does happen I absolutely cannot say. So far as I am able to explain, there does occur one day, quite by chance, and

entirely without definite searching after it, an idea which, if it happened to these people, would cause them—what shall I say ?—considerable commotion. When that idea arrives I begin to write. Here are the characters all about me, very familiar and intimate friends of my imagination, and there, miles away, is the thing that is going to make them disturbed. And so I start to write and the characters do the rest. I know more or less what is going to happen when they reach the crisis (so to call it), but how they are going to reach it, or what precisely is going to happen afterwards, I really have no idea at all.

This " explanation," when written out in cold print, sounds desperately vague and futile, and I envy the writers who tell me that they have every chapter schemed out before they start to write. But it is my way, and I have to make the best of it.

As to the original coming of the characters, generally they arise out of the face of someone I see in the streets or in any public place. In the case of short stories, the idea for the story comes almost ready-made with the face. In the case of a novel, I suppose the glimmer of the " crisis " is there when the face attracts me, but I can't remember that this ever was

actually the case. It is simply that I imagine the character, and it goes on growing until, mysteriously, the idea comes.

As to method, I write desperately slowly, and always in the morning. I write with a pen. I wish I could do it on the typewriter, because I have a painfully neat mind and love the neat appearance of type-written sheets instead of my own writing; but although I can type reasonably well, and at times have written directly on to the typewriter, I find it no good when I am engaged on a novel. If I am "writing" three hours on end, I should say my pen is not moving for more than perhaps a third of this time. The rest is thinking, and the pen is an infinitely more nimble instrument for the fits and starts of this kind of work than it is possible for the typewriter to be.

People, by the way, have an idea in this connection that all an author requires is a bit of paper and a stump of pencil. I wish it were so with me. To begin with, I cannot write with a pencil, nor possibly on any sort of paper other than that on which I am accustomed to write, and I require around me what appears to be an enormous number of things, and invariably, just as I am started, I have to get up and hunt for one that is missing. They

include, and each one is absolutely essential, a little vase in which my fountain-pen will stand upright, three or four pipes, a very large and very solid ash-tray, two or three boxes of matches, and my pocket-knife to get the tobacco out of the pipes. All my novels are written in school exercise-books, and I have used the same kind of exercise-book ever since I started.

UNCONSCIOUS PLAGIARISM

Some Strange Literary Coincidences

Introductory Article by H. GREENHOUGH SMITH
(Editor of " The Strand Magazine ")

In a recent letter to the *Observer*, Mr. Henry E. Dudeney, world-famous as the Puzzle-King, described a strange coincidence within his own experience. His story is as follows :

I was living in the country, and it was late in the evening, during the hot summer weather. My wife was retiring to bed when I said, " I will sit up awhile to get an idea for a story I have promised to write to-morrow." I sat by an open window and put out all the lights except a solitary candle standing on a table close by. Almost immediately a large moth came into the room and flew round and round the candle, as these things have a way of doing, and in a few minutes' time made a desperate dash at the flame, and actually extinguished it.—I had got what I wanted, and went straight upstairs, meeting my wife, who said, " What, so soon ! " I replied, " Yes. Main incident a man left by his enemies tied to a chair in a solitary hut, with a lighted candle stuck in an open barrel of gunpowder. When the flame descends to the powder the situation will no longer interest him. But a friendly moth enters, puts out the candle, and saves the man's life." " But," said my wife, " would a moth actually put out a candle ? " I replied, " I have just seen it done."

Now comes a curious sequel. Next morning at the breakfast table, amongst the correspondence, was a number of periodicals. Opening the one for which my story was destined I glanced through its pages. Then, pointing to a particular tale, I handed it to my wife. "Why, it's your story!" she exclaimed. And so it was. There was the incident complete, of the man tied to the chair in the hut, the candle and the gunpowder and the moth that saved his life.

My story was never written. Had it been without my seeing the other, I should reasonably have been accused of stealing the idea.

This coincidence is of course a double one: that of the same idea occurring to two persons and that of the appearance, at that very moment, of the copy of the magazine. Striking as it is, however, the case is by no means a unique one. I can add two others which, I think, are quite as strange.

In my youth, when I, too, was writing stories, I chanced to see in a shop window a fountain with a dancing cork. Like Mr. Dudeney's moth and candle the sight gave birth to an idea—the idea of a visitor to the geysers of New Zealand, those colossal fountains which at intervals burst upwards from their craters fifty feet into the air, play, gigantic, in the sunlight, and sink again into the gulf. My spectator, peering down a geyser-shaft,

slips down the glassy slant, and is caught upon a ledge some feet below the surface. Far down he hears the raging waters, which at their next explosion will shoot him far into the air. But when the moment comes, and he is whirled aloft, he finds that he is neither drowned nor shattered, but that he is kept dancing on the summit—the gigantic jet has served him like a cork.

I did my best to describe the sensations of the victim :

> At first the fountain kept me spinning dizzily upon its very summit ; then, as I chanced to come erect, a position that afforded less resistance, I sank suddenly a dozen feet within the body of the jet—only the next instant to be cast aloft again, tossed, whirled and shaken, at the will of the capricious waters. The dizzy height—the strange resistance of the liquid column—the fiery sting of the heated waters—the deafening roar of the cascade in falling—the dazzling iridescence of the sunlit steam and spray—the strangling sense of breathing air and water—I was conscious of them all, but vaguely, as of the phantasmagoria of a dream.

Then suddenly the fountain throws him off ; he falls into the crater, which is full of water, swims for dear life, and, just as the column, falling, strives to suck him down the chasm, grasps a jut of rock, and so is saved.

This tale appeared in *Temple Bar*. Some years later, when I had become the editor of *The Strand Magazine*, I received one day from Robert Barr a story built upon identically the same idea. He had made a Pasha, for his own amusement, force a prisoner to dance, cork-fashion, on a gigantic fountain-jet. The sensations of the victim, as he described them, were precisely those which I had striven to depict. When I sent a copy of my tale to Barr, he was the most astonished man on record. "It is incredible," he said; "I could have sworn that I had found a new idea! We should never talk of plagiarism—it may be all coincidence, however unbelievable!"

Here, again, the coincidence is two-fold—Barr had not only had the same idea, but had sent his story to the very man who had forestalled him. His tale, "The Pasha's Prisoner," appeared in *The Strand Magazine* in July, 1898.

These cases are remarkable enough. But what, then, shall be said of the example which I am about to quote? In a volume of short stories—most masterly short stories, all of them—entitled "Where the Pavement Ends," by John Russell, is one of which the main idea is the experience of a diver, whose companions

in a boat above him are attacked by savages, and who, left alone upon the bottom of the sea, staggers to the shore, and arising like an apparition from the ocean, in his diving-dress and helmet with great goggle eyes, is taken by the cannibals for some kind of an appalling god, is carried to their temple, and set up as a joss before his savage worshippers, with the risk, if he reveals himself, of being thrown into the pot. A more striking theme was surely never hit upon by any writer, nor one less likely to occur to two quite independent writers. Yet this is the exact idea of H. G. Wells's story, "Jimmy Goggles the God," which had been published more than twenty years before!

Such coincidences seem too strange for fiction. But what coincidence is too strange for truth?

The preceding article was sent to twenty leading fiction-writers, who were asked if any instance of the kind has ever come within their own experience. The replies received were most remarkable, both in interest and in number. Even those who had no instance to report had something apposite to say. To begin with, Mr. H. G. Wells replies: "I think Russell's plagiarism was a case of

drifting memory (like some of Disraeli's). He had known my book and written to me about it, but he was so entirely unconscious of plagiarism that he sent me the story himself ! " This case, therefore, is not, strictly speaking, one of pure coincidence, but in another way is even more remarkable, and of the deepest interest to the student of the psychology of the subconscious mind.

Then Mr. Arnold Bennett tells us : " I cannot remember that any such thing ever happened to me, but I have fairly frequently heard of similar happenings in the literary life. The instances which you give are extremely interesting. I think this subject might be pursued with advantage It would be worth a little book." It would, indeed—and not so small a book, it seems, as might have been imagined.

Mr. W. W. Jacobs has no instance either. Indeed, the inquiry has rendered him so nervous of finding that he has used a second-hand idea that he half hints that he will give up writing stories for the future ! But let us not be frightened—Jacobs is a wag.

Mrs. Belloc Lowndes puts forth an interesting theory : " I have read your article with deep interest. But though I have frequently read

of such occurrences, nothing of the kind has come my way. I can't help thinking that often the genesis of each case is in the fact that the second writer *has been told as having happened in real life* the plot of a good and striking story. He or she says to himself or herself, ' What a splendid tale this would make ! ' and as a result we have a ' coincidence.' But this seems to me one of these cases when ' *Toute vérité n'est pas bonne à dire.*' I suspect that this, exactly, is what did happen in the last example you quote—that of ' Goggles the God.' I myself have rejected a wonderful story told me as ' fact ' because I felt sure, somehow, that the teller unconsciously was telling of something she had read, not heard."

No doubt the theory will be often found to give the true solution. Yet it is not easy to believe that the adventure of the diver-god can ever have been related as having happened in actual life.

Mr. H. de Vere Stacpoole relates a curious case in which an idea of his was plagiarized, not by another writer, but by Nature herself. A sea-captain wrote and told him of an island near Puka Paka, which had obviously been copied, in full detail, from " The Blue Lagoon " !

We now print in full the letters of writers who have themselves encountered cases of the kind in question.

"SAPPER."

I don't think I ever have experienced anything of the sort. But the last sentence—What coincidence is too strange for truth?—puts me in mind of a thing which though not literary in any sense is rather amazing.

A pal of mine got married in the early summer of 1914. He spent part of his honeymoon on a motor tour through France. One day he and his wife had lunch by the roadside, and he threw the empty bottle of champagne into the ditch beside them.

Four months later, during the retreat, he was snatching a few moments' sleep one night, and felt something hard underneath him. It was a bottle, and without thinking he moved it away. Dawn came, and he found himself staring at it—then at the place where he was. It was the identical bottle, and the identical spot where he and his wife had lunched.

Now, supposing a novelist made anything in a book turn on a thing like that, what would the critics say?

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL.

The only personal incident I can recall is this :

My novel, " The Other Side," was published shortly after Arnold Bennett published his " The Glimpse." At that time Bennett and I had never met. My novel was published serially before Bennett's book was published. The same theme had occurred to both of us. Our heroes were musicians ; each underwent a similar experience after death. Indeed, there is so much in common between the two books that any critic might reasonably accuse either Bennett or me of plagiarism. It is remarkable that none did so. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in a short story published long after "The Other Side," described a motor accident and presented the driver of the car standing by his own dead body—exactly what happened to my hero ! It would be ridiculous to accuse him of plagiarism. It just happened that Doyle, Bennett, and myself thought of a similar theme and worked it out, each in his own way.

MAX PEMBERTON.

Many years ago, after I had published " The Impregnable City," a certain newspaper de-

voted four columns to printing side by side extracts from my work and from a new volume by Jules Verne. The similarity was astonishing. I may note, of course, that Jules Verne's book was published some time after my own. I was invited to join in a protest against this alleged plagiarism, but I refused, pointing out that all adventure writers owed more to Jules Verne than they could express, and that in this kind of thing it was absurd to suggest that a great author such as he would crib from a comparatively unknown author such as myself.

The two ideas were exceedingly alike in that in both there was an island, which harboured a strange people, and in both access was had to it by submarines passing under tunnels and so to a lake in the centre of the island. At the time we wrote these books the submarine of course was not the proved instrument it is now. It was at a very elementary stage, and both Verne and myself were writing twenty years ahead of our time.

RAFAEL SABATINI.

Four or five years ago, at a Swiss winter resort, it was proposed to vary the usual after-dinner amusements by a dramatic programme

to include a series of playlets. Discovering an author on the spot, it occurred to the promoters of the scheme to induce him to contribute an original sketch. They approached me, and I yielded to their request, which was that I should write them a Grand Guignol thrill.

I took for theme the sudden explosion of the hatred for each other accumulated in years of misunderstanding by a married couple. The man was a rather spineless working journalist of the poorer sort ; impecunious and without prospects, resigned to the ill-rewarded drudgery imposed upon him by his limitations ; the woman was a foolish scold with ungratified and ungratifiable social aspirations. He blamed her improvident, unpractical ways and the distraction of her nagging for his comparative failure in life ; she blamed his incompetence and invertebrate nature for the sordidness of her existence.

The explosion which was to lay bare their mutual bitterness would gather a certain ironic force if a trivially comic—almost farcical—spark were employed to fire the train. She was ordering from their landlady two eggs for their tea. The man, jaded and worn by his day's work, corrected the order to three eggs, demanding two for himself. From that trifling differ-

ence the quarrel sprang. She told him that they could not afford three eggs. This, he asserted, was because she did not practise sufficient economy in her dress. An egg in the stomach of the breadwinner was more important than a feather on her head. Thence a flood of mutual recrimination, searching farther and farther back into their married life, until their hatred of each other stood stark and only another word was wanting to produce on either side a blind access of fury leading to murder.

It was at this stage of the piece of writing which had swept from farce to tragedy that I felt that however much it might meet the wishes of those for whom it was being written, it was hardly suitable for the environment in which it was to be played.

It is necessary, so that the coincidence in question may be appreciated, to dwell thus upon the evolution of the plot.

At first I thought of scrapping the whole thing and attempting something else. But, pleased with much of what I had written, on the one hand, and detesting waste, on the other, I asked myself if I could not give the thing a twist which should restore it at the close to the atmosphere of farce in which it had opened. Whilst seeking this, I suddenly conceived a

notion which turned the whole thing into an elaborate joke, a burlesque by which the audience should be spoofed.

So, at the height of the quarrel, the woman stabbed the man, and after a brief scene of horrified contemplation of her action she rang the bell. When the entering landlady inquires: " Did you ring, ma'am ? " the answer is : " Yes. I wanted to tell you . . . that we shall require . . . only one egg for tea."

The sketch, partly rewritten to this anti-climax and played in deadly earnest, went very well. After the gasp of amazement from the audience, a roar of laughter was our reward.

The whole thing had been a joke, and a joke I desired it to remain ; a joke that had served its purpose. It was too far removed from the type of work with which my name is associated to make me desire for it a wider publication than it had received. But one night, some months later, I was dining with Leon M. Lion and Horace Annesley Vachell, and after dinner the conversation happened to turn upon the mystery of laughter, the odd sources of it and the methods by which it may be provoked. Various curious laughter-compelling situations were put forward, and to these I contributed the plot I have detailed above. It took the

fancy of Leon M. Lion to such an extent that he begged me to let him see the MS. Later on after he had read it, I yielded, though rather reluctantly, to his persuasions that he should use it, and it was agreed that he should send it to Mr. Charlot with a view to its being included in a revue.

A fortnight or so later came a letter from Mr. Charlot in which he said that he fully agreed with Lion as to the effectiveness of the sketch ; so much so, indeed, that a sketch on practically identical lines had formed part of a revue recently produced by him (the name of which I forget). The only outstanding difference between the two was that mine was concerned with eggs and the other one with, I think, chops.

My first assumption was that someone who had seen or heard of my sketch in Switzerland had appropriated the idea. But further investigation showed that the sketch in Mr. Charlot's revue was produced some months before I wrote mine !

W. B. MAXWELL.

Although, perhaps, with less remarkable features of coincidence, I think you will find that most writers of fiction have had their ideas

forestalled ; and some of them so often that they live in constant fear of this distressing accident. That is certainly my own case. The first novel I ever wrote was about bad luck brought to a man by the ownership of a large black pearl, and it seemed to me a very brilliant and interesting affair. While it was being offered to publishers Mr. F. Anstey issued " The Fallen Idol," which to all intents and purposes was my own story, but of course ten thousand times better done. This catastrophe knocked the very heart out of me : I not only withdrew the manuscript and burned it, but refrained from making another attempt at fiction for a great number of years.

I had such difficulty about the title for a book of mine called " The Guarded Flame " that before the end I felt a superstitious dread that the book itself was going to be forestalled. Title after title fell before the wind. It was in the printer's hands at last as " The Lighthouse "; but that title had been used. I called it something else, and had to change it again. In despair I gave it the name of the principal character, " Richard Baldock," and it was so being printed when we saw the announcement of the immediate publication of " Richard Baldock," by Mr. Archibald Marshall. This,

however, is merely a coincidence of title and is not perhaps worth citing.

STACY AUMONIER.

I'm afraid most of my ideas have been forestalled by someone else! But I think the only personal experience I have had of unconscious plagiarism concerned a story I wrote some years ago, called "The Everlasting Club." It appeared in the *London Mercury*. Two of my friends who read it said they seemed to have read the story before, but couldn't think where. Then one day I had an anonymous letter signed "Some Cambridge Men." It was, like most anonymous letters, rude and dogmatic. It accused me of having deliberately "lifted" this story from a story written by a Don of Jesus, which had appeared in the *Granta*, many years previously.

Unfortunately, I have never been able to verify this, as I did not know the Don's name, and did not in any case feel sufficiently interested to have all the files of that estimable magazine searched. But I presume that there was no particular point in these anonymous gentlemen making the accusation (and buying a three-halfpenny stamp) unless there was something in it.

The main idea of "The Everlasting Club" is

that of seven British officers thrown together in an obscure spot in Picardy on Armistice Night. They get to talking about immortality. The result leads to a decision to form themselves into an Everlasting Club, that is to say a club that denies that death has any reality. They meet every year in a barn in Sussex, dine, and discuss their pet subject. One by one they die, but the dead man's place is always set, and they carry on as though he were actually there. It wilters down to one man, a highly-strung Scotsman. He carries on, but is found dead there one morning by a gardener in rather mysterious circumstances. The president of the Everlasting Club had been a powerful man, with a hand-grip that made men wince. On his hand he wore a signet-ring.

When the gardener discovers the body of the last member he notices that his right hand appears crushed, and there is the imprint on it of a signet-ring.

F. BRITTEN AUSTIN.

I have experienced at least two curious "Literary Coincidences":

(1) In September, 1911, on a railway journey, I was introduced to the well-known writer, Edward Cecil—an introduction that was the

beginning of a friendship which has happily endured to this day. We talked " shop," and he said that he would very much like me to read a story of his which had appeared, with special coloured illustrations, in *The Strand Magazine* of February, 1911. The next day I procured the magazine and read the story, entitled " Grigsby-Antiques." To my amazement, in theme and plot—although, of course, style and dialogue were utterly different—it was precisely the same story as the first story I ever had printed, " The Dealer in Antiques," published in the Christmas Number of *The Graphic*, 1908. Naturally, I showed my story to Edward Cecil, and his astonishment equalled mine. Until we met, he had never even heard of me, and he had not the faintest remembrance of ever having seen my version in *The Graphic*.

He may, of course, have glanced over it and forgotten it, with the idea left dormant in his mind. But if plagiarism there was, it was most certainly unconscious—he is the last man to steal from anybody—and it is more probable that he had quite independently hit upon the same idea. The strangeness of the coincidence is enhanced by the curious chance that in the first half-hour of our acquaintance he should quite innocently have drawn my attention to

what had all the appearance of his plagiarism of myself!

(2) In 1920 I was writing a story for *The Strand Magazine* entitled "The Treasure of the Tombs." It was a story of Ancient Assyrian treasure concealed in sculpture-fronted rock-tombs high up on an inaccessible terrace in the Kurdish mountains, and accidentally discovered by two young English airmen when on reconnaissance during the War. After the War, they go to an ex-staff officer of their acquaintance, and persuade him to finance an aerial expedition to recover the treasure.

It was a story I wrote with that luxurious fluency and ease which is like an "angel's visit"—so rare is it—to the professional author. My pen ran on at express speed until I came to work out the precise course taken by my heroes through the mountains prior to discovering the treasure. I worked it out, of course, on a map, and though—being a reconnaissance—it had of necessity to be somewhat complicated, I was at perfect liberty to choose arbitrarily any course whatever in that tangle of hills. But, for some mysterious reason, I could not satisfy myself and soon I had quite a little pile of crossed-out N.E.s and S.W.s, etc., on the MS. Suddenly, my hesitation

vanished and I put down a quite arbitrary and distinctly complicated course which subtly somehow seemed to satisfy me, and then galloped on with the story to its end. When I had finished it, it occurred to me that it would be as well to check up my local colour before sending it out. I therefore took down Layard's "Nineveh" from my shelves, a book I had never read and of which I had then and there to *cut the pages*. I ploughed through this for some time without finding anything of particular interest—and then to my astonishment I read how, after long months of excavation, Layard gave himself a holiday, took some donkeys and guides, and went into the mountains, starting from precisely the same spot as my airmen, going by precisely the same complicated route through the valleys as I had finally made them take by air, and then—just about where I had described it—he came upon sculptured rock-tombs high up on an inaccessible terrace, *exactly as I had arbitrarily invented them*. I was never more surprised in my life. I am ready to swear on oath that I had never previously even glanced at the contents of Layard's book.

Nor was this the only coincidence in that story. When my airmen had first called on their

financier friend, I had made them leave with him a cuneiform-inscribed fragment of sarcophagus to prove their *bona fides*. Unable to read it himself, he thinks first to take it to the British Museum, and then remembers that in his club there is a member—to whom I assigned an arbitrarily chosen name—who has given his life to Assyrian excavation until interrupted by the War. In the story, I gave a little paragraph sketching out his quite imaginary career. When it was all typed, I thought that perhaps it would be well to go to the British Museum myself and see if I had made any terrible mistakes. I went, and found a post-war Government department still in possession of the Assyrian rooms. I had to console myself with buying the official handbook. In that handbook there is or was a succinct history of Assyrian excavation—and in that book I found, *complete even to my invented name*, a *résumé* of the labours of the last British excavator who had been interrupted by the outbreak of the War, precisely as I—believing I was writing fiction—had written it! Again, I am positive that I had never consciously heard of him. But I had to take out the typed page of my story and drastically alter it. Coincidence? or—what?

THE BOOK I MOST ENJOYED WRITING

A Symposium of Well-known Novelists

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

I have never written to order in my life or sold any work until it was well on the way to completion. Therefore I have enjoyed writing every book, whereas, if I had written under pressure with a feeling of compulsion, I should never have regarded it as anything but a task. Naturally, as I regard the psychic question as the most important in the world, it is writing books on that subject which has given me most satisfaction, though the least productive from the financial point of view.

I had great satisfaction, also, from my "British Campaign in Flanders," because I had devised my own system of intelligence quite apart from (in fact, in opposition to) that of the War Office. I knew that my facts were true, and I knew that I had got them by my own wits, and that no one else had got them, and that was naturally a source of satisfaction. I have had little to change, save to fill up names and places which the Censor deleted. Of my novels, "The White Company" gave

me most pleasure. I was young and full of the first joy of life and action, and I think I got some of it into my pages. When I wrote the last line, I remember that I cried: "Well, I'll never beat that," and threw the inky pen at the opposite wall, which was papered with duck's-egg green! The black smudge was there for many a day.

"Rodney Stone" I enjoyed also; for I always had, and have, a love of boxing and an admiration of the old fighting men, who were humble heroes.

Verse gives greater pleasure than prose, for it is a more compact, carefully chiselled article. There, also, I have had occasional satisfaction and occasional disappointment.

KATHLYN RHODES.

I think I enjoyed writing "Afterwards" more than any of my other books, though I can give no reason for the preference. Next comes "Courage"—in this case I enjoyed writing it because it recalled happy days spent in Italy. There was an odd coincidence bound up with "Afterwards." I rather liked inventing a small girl called Cherry. Weeks later, while acting as secretary in a war-hospital,

I recognized my own Cherry—to the life—in the matron's small daughter, also named Cherry. Everyone who read " Afterwards " congratulated me on my portrait of " Matron's Cherry " —yet I never heard of her until the book had been published. Talking of names, the " hero " in " Afterwards " has no Christian name. I chose the surname Anstice from a war-list, but could not find a name to suit it, so Dr. Anstice never had a Christian name at all. Only one reviewer remarked on the omission !

RAFAEL SABATINI.

You have asked me a question to which I find it more than difficult to return an answer satisfactorily. At the moment it seems to me that " Scaramouche " is the book I most enjoyed writing. But I suspect that this is because " Scaramouche " is the last book that I have written, and distance has not yet lent it that disenchantment which my books procure me. The fact is that I am a thoroughly unnatural parent where my literary offspring are concerned. I take no sort of satisfaction or pride in any but the book I happen to be writing at the moment. That there is joy in accomplishment I know, because I have just experienced

it. But in retrospect there is only despair, effacing the memory of that joy, and so rendering comparisons impossible. I like to think that the reason of this is that I have not yet exhausted my capacity to do better than I have done, and I tremble to think of the time when I may cease to blush for these children of my fancy. I view complacency in this, as in other matters of life, merely as the outward sign of intellectual stagnation. I sincerely trust that these particulars may meet the case. It may not be very satisfactory ; but it is sincere.

J. D. BERESFORD.

The book I most enjoyed writing was " The Hampdenshire Wonder." It was my second attempt at a novel—if it can be called a novel : there is not, for instance, the least shadow of a love story in it. My first book had " been about " for over two years. It was a long and intensely realistic life-history or the beginning of one, and " The Hampdenshire Wonder " was a pleasant escape into fantasy. I never had any difficulty with it ; it might have been a better book, possibly, if I had. All the time I was writing it I had the feeling of being supplied with abundant material and I seemed

to have very little trouble in expressing it. Also, the story was a " lark." I felt a delightful irresponsibility in setting it down. One was not haunted by the fear of anachronisms, since the thing was pitched slightly into the future. But altogether I thoroughly enjoyed doing it. It was a short book, only just over sixty thousand words, and I wrote it in three months in the intervals of trying to earn a living.

Just why I never felt the same freedom and irresponsibility with other books I cannot say. It may be that I never hoped to get " The Hampdenshire Wonder " published. My first book had not been accepted when the second was begun, and I had had no experience of the terrors of professional criticism ! It is interesting to note that this book has had a smaller sale than any other I have written, including even collections of sketches. I can only suppose the just inference to be that when I write to please myself, I please no one else.

MRS. BAILLIE REYNOLDS.

The book which gave me the most pleasure to write was possibly the first I ever tried my hand upon. It was called " A Moorland Squire," or—in the language of my family,

who chaffed me unmercifully—" A. Morland, Esq."

This masterpiece has never seen the light. I came across some pages of it the other day, immured in an old cupboard.

Another book which I wrote off at full speed and with extraordinary zest was " Thalassa ! " A curious fact with regard to this book was that, when it was done, I thought it so poor that I did not wish to publish it. I went to Sir George Hutchinson—as he has often since laughingly reminded me—and begged him not to send it to press, as I had come to the conclusion that it was too bad for publication. He knew better ; and the question he put to me shows, I think, his great acumen : " *How did you feel when you were writing it ?* Didn't it convince you at the time ? " I was constrained to admit it. " Then it will convince others," he replied confidently ; and this book has been my greatest success, as far as a wide public is concerned, having run into more than a hundred and fifty thousand copies.

Next to this I would place, in order of pleasure in writing, " The Daughter Pays." This book I wrote in the dark and terrible winter 1915–16. I had two boys at the front, and my husband was desperately ill that winter. A nurse was

impossible to obtain, all of them being occupied with the wounded. I sometimes think that the writing of this novel was what kept me going through that difficult period. I loved the story, and wrote the whole of it in less than twelve weeks. Next to " Thalassa ! " it is, I think, the most popular of my novels, and is now having great success in the U.S.A. on the films.

I remember one of my readers—and a very distinguished lady too—writing to me to say that she forced herself to leave off reading it from time to time, in order not to finish it too soon ! That is the kind of tribute I most love. I would far rather have people say, " I could not put your book down," than have them say, " Your book is very clever." And it is certain that the books my public have most enjoyed have been the books it was the greatest pleasure to write.

G. K. CHESTERTON

thinks, on the whole, that " The Flying Inn " was the book that amused him most to write, though he got a good deal of pleasure out of two controversial ones—i.e., " Heretics " and " Orthodoxy."

COMPTON MACKENZIE.

I cannot claim to have enjoyed writing any of my books ; they are associated with maddening interludes of physical pain. Even when all the circumstances are favourable, I write with such difficulty, straining and groaning over every word (unless I am writing dialogue), that " enjoy " cannot be used in connection with such torment. I wrote the second half of " Guy and Pauline " waiting for a telegram to fetch me to Gallipoli. I wrote " Sylvia Scarlett " waiting for a telegram to send me to Tripoli, and with doctors continually arriving to hold medical boards over my carcass. I wrote " Poor Relations " almost entirely in bed ; I wrote half the second volume of " Sinister Street " working eight or nine hours at a stretch all night through, because it was impossible to work by day, owing to the excitement of the early days of the War. I rather enjoyed writing the first two or three chapters of the first volume of " Sinister Street," because I was working in a diminutive room covered with a black-and-gold Chinese wallpaper and furnished with red lacquer ; but that pleasure only lasted six weeks, when I had to go to America, and I could not write

any more of " Sinister Street " for seven months, which meant that the rest of the volume was finished against time. I might have enjoyed writing " Carnival " if, in the middle of it, I had not had to sell some of my best-loved books to pay the household bills. " The Vanity Girl " was written in a cloud of worries, and as for " Rich Relatives," my publisher cannot read it, for it is associated in his mind with such difficulties in getting it finished by me and getting it produced by himself. I did enjoy writing the first four pages of " The Passionate Elopement," but I cannot have enjoyed the remainder, for it took two years to finish. No : the only pleasure I get from writing is an idea that I am going to enjoy writing a book planned for ten years hence. I even deny myself the pleasure of writing about some of my contemporaries, which really might be enjoyable.

W. W. JACOBS.

My memory for some forms of enjoyment is not very good. I am not asked which book added most to my troubles, or took the greatest toll of my hair, but : which—book—I—most—enjoyed—writing ! Well, let us say " Salt-

haven." I can truthfully say that I enjoyed writing that as much as any of my stories. I seem to remember that it came easily—and I am not ungrateful.

FRANK SWINNERTON.

I do not think you will find many authors who will enjoy the act of writing. I know only one who does, and he is a man in whom energy is superabundant. As a rule the author enjoys planning his book and thinking about it ; he loves to dwell in thought upon his characters, his ideas, his situations, but he postpones as late as he possibly can the hard labour of composition. I am afraid that the only novel that I have really enjoyed writing is the first one of all—a book called " The Merry Heart." For other reasons, as a friend has just remarked, I enjoyed writing a critical study of the works of Robert Louis Stevenson. But apart from these books, there is none that I remember otherwise than as a triumph of determination over laziness and sloth. The rewards of authorship are, of course, another matter ; and so are the joys of inventing and developing a book. These have nothing to do with your specific inquiry.

CLEMENCE DANE.

I dislike writing, and get little pleasure out of the actual work. The one exception is my last play—" Will Shakespeare." That I enjoyed working at because I loved the subject, but the actual work is always to me depressing and exhausting. I am afraid this is unromantic, but it's true.

HUGH WALPOLE.

The book of mine that I have most enjoyed writing was " The Green Mirror," my own favourite amongst my books. I enjoyed this most, I think, because I had a theme and a background to which I was sympathetic, and because I seemed to know the characters in that book better than in others.

BARRY PAIN.

I think that the book that a man most enjoys writing is generally his first book. But I always enjoy writing unless, as sometimes happens, I am writing to order, or am tired of my subject. There is also a special pleasure in setting up a difficulty and dealing with it, just as painters rather like to make difficulties

for themselves by blending lights of different kinds, and so on. For that reason I particularly enjoyed writing my last book, " Going Home." That book was fantasy. It was written parallel to real life, but at a distance from it ; the deviation at the beginning of the book being in the direction of humour and at the close of the book in the direction of poetry. The difficulty of getting as much as possible into as few words as possible is also very attractive; but the importance of a work being now judged by its length, brevity is a virtue which has to be its own reward.

SHEILA KAYE-SMITH.

The book I most enjoyed writing was my first book, " The Tramping Methodist," because it was not written with a view to publication, so I had no publishers or public to think of while I was writing.

IAN HAY.

In the ordinary way, the book an author enjoys writing most is his second. His first is written in labour and uncertainty. He has no idea whether it will ever be accepted by a publisher, or, if it is accepted, whether it will

ever be read. But when his first-born *has* been accepted, *and* published, and has met with a sufficient measure of indulgence from the critics and appreciation from the public, and the publisher has said : " My dear fellow, you must let us have another novel in time for publication next autumn," then the whole face of the world is changed. All Nature seems smiling and gay. Blind alleys no longer exist. Our author sits down forthwith and plunges into work on his second novel with the exhilaration which comes from writing, for the first time, for certain publication. That is why I enjoyed writing " The Right Stuff " more than any other novel of mine.

There are two other books whose memories I shall always particularly cherish. One was " The First Hundred Thousand," the writing of which—it was scribbled mostly, in pencil, in a field dispatch book—afforded me real relief and distraction from the grim and pressing business of trench warfare.

The other is " The Willing Horse "—a picture as faithful as I can make it, before memory becomes blurred, of London during the War, and the strange welter of heroism, frivolity, stoicism, hysteria, extravagance, privation, danger to life and indifference to death

through which the greatest city in the world shouldered its way—on the whole, with immense credit to itself—for more than four long years.

Also, " The Willing Horse " is a tribute to those men and women, young and old, who played the game throughout—who shouldered the burden without comment or condition as a matter of course, jettisoning health, prospects, too often life itself, in order to be able to shoulder something more than their share. Many of these have not survived: more lamentable still, the moulds which cast them appear for the moment to be broken. But their memory and example remain.

MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES.

I think every woman writer would agree that, in a sense, she had most enjoyed writing her first book. Indeed, I could go further and say that a woman's first novel is almost always her best. Even if defaced by certain serious faults—more of omission than of commission—into her first book a writer has poured a great deal of accumulated thought and experience, full of a fresh, springlike quality, difficult—nay, almost impossible—to recapture.

However, in spite of this preamble, the book I most enjoyed writing was a short novel entitled " The Uttermost Farthing." As is generally the case with all my stories, the central theme or plot remained hidden in my mind a great many years before I actually sat down to write the story. When living in early girlhood in France I had the good fortune to meet a distinguished official of the Paris Prefecture of Police, and, talking of the strange, inexplicable things that happen in life, he mentioned the disappearance of a Parisian lady who, leaving home, as her family thought, for the South of France, was finally discovered to have died in a train in Brittany—that is, hundreds of miles from the place to which she was supposed to have gone.

The teller of this strange story did not offer any solution of the mystery. But the utterly mysterious occurrence lingered in my mind and gradually took shape in the form worked out by me in " The Uttermost Farthing." I wrote the story very quickly, and though certain passages in it were rewritten again and again, as is the case with all my work, probably twenty-five thousand words out of the forty thousand comprising the novel remain as they were first put down. My experience has

always been that a dramatic scene needs less rewriting than any other kind of imaginative work, and " The Uttermost Farthing " is, in a sense, compact with drama.

This little story was the first book of mine which was really well reviewed, both in England and America. It was translated into French and into German and ran as a short serial in a Paris, a Berlin, and a Vienna daily paper. It has also had a large sale in the Tauchnitz edition, and a blind American clergyman tried to make a play of it !

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL.

Your question is a " corker." Have you ever asked a fond mother, with a quiverful, which of her darlings she loves best ? Enjoyment includes ease of mind. Some books are born after great travail ; others come easily and without pangs. Nobody can dogmatize about it. All the same, I cannot conceive certain authors getting enjoyment out of writing certain books where the theme is inevitably painful. Harland must have enjoyed writing " The Cardinal's Snuffbox," but I cannot envisage my old friend Morley Roberts chortling with glee over " Hearts of Women."

I enjoyed writing " Blinkers " because it is a romance of the preconceived idea, and preconceived ideas—which seldom pan out in practice—are very funny. I enjoyed hugely writing " Quinney's," both play and book, because the theme amused me. I have had to wrestle with other themes, dig into dull books of reference, puzzle out problems, and there is, of course, a solid satisfaction in doing this, if you do it well, but enjoyment . . .

It is likely that books which are a pleasure to write are also a pleasure to read. I have heard brother-scribes affirm that their best stuff has been done *au premier coup*, almost without effort. A young man sent a poem to an editor, entitled " Why do I Live ? " The editor, when returning the poem, answered the question : " You live because you *sent* your poem to us instead of bringing it." But the poor fellow may have enjoyed writing it !

THE MOST MOVING PASSAGES IN LITERATURE

DAME ELLEN TERRY.

THE first that springs to my mind is that most beautiful of Shakespeare's Sonnets which hangs in my room, and which I send you for your purpose. How many more exquisite passages could one think of !

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste :
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight :
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored and sorrows end.

ARNOLD BENNETT.

The speech of Romeo, immediately after the death of Paris, in the fifth act of " Romeo and Juliet " :

How oft, when men are at the point of death,
Have they been merry !—which their keepers call
A lightning before death. O, how may I
Call this a lightning ! Oh my love ! my wife !
Death, that hath suck'd the honey of thy breath,
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty ;
Thou art not conquer'd ; beauty's ensign yet
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
And death's pale flag is not advanced there.
Tybalt, liest thou there in thy bloody sheet ?
O, what more favour can I do to thee,
Than with that hand that cut thy youth in twain
To sunder his that was thine enemy ?
Forgive me, cousin ! Ah, dear Juliet,
Why art thou yet so fair ? Shall I believe
That unsubstantial death is amorous,
And that the lean, abhorred monster keeps
Thee here in dark to be his paramour ?
For fear of that, I still will stay with thee,
And never from this palace of dim night
Depart again ; here, here will I remain,
With worms that are thy chambermaids. O, here
Will I set up my everlasting rest,
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
From this world-wearied flesh ! Eyes, look your last !
Arms, take your last embrace ! And, lips, O you,
The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss
A dateless bargain to engrossing death !
Come, bitter conduct, come, unsavoury guide !
Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on
The dashing rocks thy sea-sick weary bark !
Here's to my love ! (*Drinks.*) O true apothecary !
Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die. (*Dies.*)

JOHN DRINKWATER.

A passage at the end of Milton's " Samson Agonistes," spoken by Manoa :

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast ; no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise, or blame ; nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.
Let us go find the body where it lies
Soak'd in his enemies' blood, and from the stream
With lavers pure and cleansing herbs wash off
The clotted gore. I, with what speed the while
(Gaza is not in plight to say us nay),
Will send for all my kindred, all my friends,
To fetch him hence and solemnly attend,
With silent obsequy and funeral train,
Home to his father's house. There will I build him
A monument, and plant it round with shade
Of laurel ever green, and branching palm,
With all his trophies hung, and acts enroll'd
In copious legend, or sweet lyric song.
Thither shall all the valiant youth resort,
And from his memory inflame their breasts
To matchless valour and adventures high ;
The virgins also shall on feastful days
Visit his tomb with flowers, only bewailing
His lot unfortunate in nuptial choice,
From whence captivity and loss of eyes.

A. S. M. HUTCHINSON.

Until you asked me for my idea of the most moving passage in English literature, I never

realized how pathetic passages abound therein. To choose between them in order to find the most pathetic is beyond me. They run from such simple beginnings as the whole of "Jackanapes," or the endings of "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" and "Tennessee's Pardner," to what would be considered far higher fields.

At the risk of being considered highbrow, I am going to break away from all the better-known and name as the most moving the last lines of "Paradise Lost." The first time I read it, I was, and still am, enormously moved by the human quality in "Paradise Lost." The spectacle of those poor creatures, Adam and Eve, caught between the millstones of the two stupendous forces controlling them was to me very poignant; and that was why most frightfully poignant I found (quoting from memory):

> Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon,
> The world was all before them where to seek
> Their place of rest and Providence their guide.
> They hand in hand, with faltering steps and slow,
> Through Eden took their solitary way.

Imagine it!

STEPHEN McKENNA.

In my opinion one of the most stirring passages is in J. M. Synge's "Riders to the Sea," where Maurya learns that the last of her sons has been drowned :

They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me. . . . I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I'll have no call now to be going down and getting holy water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening.

REBECCA WEST.

There is hardly a scene in "King Lear" that I can read without tears coming to my eyes, and that scene where Gloucester tries to throw himself over the cliff is, I think, the most moving of all. Though, of course, that last scene is very touching :

She's gone for ever.
I know when one is dead, and when one lives ;
She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass.
If that her breath will mist or stain the glass,
Why, then she lives.

Nothing else in Shakespeare affects me quite as much, though I think " Antony and Cleopatra " the most beautiful and exciting work ever penned by human being. But it doesn't contract the heart in quite the same way.

W. L. GEORGE.

The most moving scene I can recall, a scene of immortal beauty, is described in the Gospel of St. Luke :

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Then said Jesus, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

HENRY AINLEY.

The account of the burial of Sir John Moore in Thomas Hardy's " The Dynasts " :

CHAPLAIN.

" We therefore commit his body to the ground. Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." (Another gun.)

A spent ball falls not far off. They put out their lanterns. Continued firing, some shot splashing into the harbour below them.

HOPE.

In mercy to the living, who are thrust
Upon our care for their deliverance,
And run much hazard till they are embarked,
We must abridge these duties to the dead,
Who will not mind be they abridged or no.

HARDINGE.

And could he mind, would be the man to bid it . . .

HOPE.

It may be well, then, curtly to conclude,
And what's left unsaid, feel.

CHAPLAIN (*his words broken by the cannonade*).

" . . . Not to be sorry, as men without hope, for them that sleep in Him. . . . Grant this, through Jesus Christ our Mediator and Redeemer."

OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS.

Amen !

The diggers of the Ninth hastily fill in the grave, and the mournful figures retire.

The scene shuts.

GILBERT FRANKAU.

" Don Juan " (Canto I., Octets 116–117) though not by any means the most emotional

passage in English literature, is indubitably my favourite :

Oh, Plato ! Plato ! You have paved the way,
With your confounded fantasies, to more
Immoral conduct by the fancied sway
Your system feigns o'er the controlless core
Of human hearts, than all the long array
Of poets and romancers. You're a bore,
A charlatan, a coxcomb—and have been,
At best, no better than a go-between.

And Julia's voice was lost, except in sighs,
Until too late for useful conversation ;
The tears were gushing from her gentle eyes,
I wish, indeed, they had not had occasion ;
But who, alas ! can love, and then be wise ?
Not that remorse did not oppose temptation ;
A little still she strove, and much repented,
And whispering " I will ne'er consent "—consented.

MEGGIE ALBANESI, the Actress.

" Dream Children." A Reverie by Charles Lamb. The point at which I always lay down my volume, for I can read no more, starts :

Here the children fell a-crying and asked if their little mourning which they had on was not for their Uncle John, and they looked up and prayed me not to go on about their uncle, but to tell them some stories about their

pretty dead mother. Then I told them how for seven long years in hope, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W——n . . . when suddenly turning to Alice the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of re-presentment that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me or whose that bright hair was.

SIR LANDON RONALD.

This, from W. B. Yeats :

Had I the heavens' embroider'd cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet ;
But I, being poor, have only my dreams ;
I have spread my dreams under your feet ;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

H. GREENHOUGH SMITH, Editor of "The Strand Magazine."

I think the most moving passage is one from Tennyson's "Rizpah," the cry of the poor old woman who creeps out at night to the gibbet where her son's skeleton is hanging

in chains, to feel whether a fresh fragment of bone has fallen which she can bury beside the churchyard wall :

> My baby, the bones that had sucked me,
> the bones that had laughed and had cried—— !

A cry of the very agony of heartbreak. The words are drenched in tears.

SIR ROBERT DONALD, the well-known Editor.

" To Mary in Heaven " (last verse), by Robert Burns :

> Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,
> And fondly broods with miser care ;
> Time but th' impression stronger makes,
> As streams their channels deeper wear.
> My Mary, dear departed shade,
> Where is thy place of blissful rest ?
> See'st thou thy lover lowly laid ?
> Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?

ALFRED PRAGA, the Painter and Miniaturist.

> Oh for the touch of a vanished hand
> And the sound of a voice that is still.
> TENNYSON.

NORMAN DAVEY, the Novelist and Poet, Author of "The Pilgrim of a Smile" and "Guinea Girl."

There is no doubt in my mind whatever as to what is the most moving passage in all literature :

> And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani ? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?
>
> MATTHEW xxvii. 46.

"JOHN O' LONDON."

No words in literature ever impressed me more, when I first read them, than these from Wordsworth's great Ode :

> The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar ;
> Not in entire forgetfulness
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God who is our home.

VICTOR BRIDGES, the Novelist.

It depends upon the mood one happens to be in. I doubt if I have ever been more pro-

foundly stirred than when I first read the concluding paragraph of Sir Walter Ralegh's History :

> O eloquent just and mighty Death, whom none could advise thou hast persuaded, what none have dared thou hast done ; and whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised ; thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, *Hic jacet !*

HOW I "BROKE INTO PRINT"

ELINOR GLYN.

"How did I come to take up literature as a profession? Well, I dare say I did it in a way similar to many other writers—as a distraction. And yet, possibly, there was a difference. You know, about fifteen or sixteen years ago I became so crippled with rheumatism that I didn't care much whether I lived or died. You may believe how ill I was when I tell you that I had to be carried everywhere—from the house to the lawn when I wanted a change of scene, and back again when I grew weary of the view and ached for bed. And I didn't know what to do to distract my thoughts. Long periods of 'thinking' are not good for anyone, particularly invalids, and I received many scoldings from my doctor. Then one day I began to wonder to myself what a young girl would think and feel during her first round of visits to country houses. When I was a girl I visited many country houses and kept journals of my doings, and I had a sudden longing to see and read them again. So they were looked out, and I had some amusement re-reading

them. And as I lay in my lounge chair my imagination began to work and, with my own diaries for a foundation, I started to write 'The Visits of Elizabeth.'

"I knew so little about authorship that I perpetrated the fearful crime of writing on both sides of the paper in an ordinary copy-book. And no one pointed out to me the literary misdemeanour that I was guilty of. Then, when my relatives used to come to see how I was, I would read them extracts from 'Elizabeth,' and they appeared so interested that the idea of having the 'Visits' published did not seem so preposterous after all. So we sent them to the London *World*, where they appeared anonymously. And after they had been running a little while friends began to send me copies of the paper, as they thought 'The Visits of Elizabeth' might cheer me up! When they appeared in book form and proved so popular my interest in life revived and my recovery was rapid. That is how I 'broke into print,' and to me it was a very pleasant way of doing so."

Elinor Glyn—or Mrs. Clayton Glyn, to give her her full name—does nearly all her writing at Versailles, and surely no one could have a more ideal spot for inspiration. Her method

of work is interesting. She will not accept an "order" for a book, and will not publish anything that does not satisfy her. She does not write a line until the whole story is mapped out in her imagination. And then, before she begins the actual work of writing, she relates the story either to her mother or to her daughter. If they do not approve of the plot, then the story is never written. If they do, then she works at white heat, and the novel is completed in a few weeks. All her characters and settings are based on actual observation, and here the voluminous journals she has kept all her life come in useful, though the disguise of art is naturally thrown over actuality. Mrs. Glyn considers that the best book she ever wrote is "Halcyone," and this opinion is shared by a great many of her critics. "It tells you what I believe," said the authoress, and any book that honestly does that is the best book that a writer can give.

Like most famous novelists, Mrs. Glyn frequently receives requests from would-be writers asking for "advice." And this is the "advice" she gives: "Never put in your story an atom of irrelevant material, and nothing that has not an intimate bearing on the thread. Never be afraid of your own con-

victions, and never write a word you don't believe."

MR. AND MRS. C. N. WILLIAMSON.

The first story written by Mr. and Mrs. C. N. Williamson was published in *The Strand Magazine*. Mrs. Williamson herself relates the incident. " Our first story written together was very short, and we called it ' Midnight and the Man.' We were only just married then, and were living in a queer old Surrey farm-house, with a trap-door in the floor of the drawing-room, and dark, mysterious woods ringing in the few acres of farmland. We used to feel the influence of that trap-door, I think, and try to live up to it ! Also we used to take long walks on moonlight nights in the woods, and talk over things we should like to do in future, and stories we should like to write. All our thoughts were thoughts of mystery and strange happenings, during those walks ; and it was out of a conversation about queer things which might be invented that the story of ' Midnight and the Man ' was evolved under the Surrey pines.

" At the moment we had no idea of making it into a story ; but I lay awake thinking of it.

Then finally I could rest no longer, but got up and began scribbling. The whole of the idea was my husband's, and when he saw what I had done with it he was quite amused. Here and there I had been unscientific, and he, knowing everything that any amateur *ought* to know about mechanism, touched these parts up.

"The editor of *The Strand* was a friend of my husband's, and I, too, knew him.

"'I shall go and show that story to *The Strand* editor,' said I.

"'No,' said my husband. 'It's a queer, fantastic sort of thing. He mightn't care for it, but wouldn't like to refuse it, perhaps, if it came from me.'

"However, being an American, I disobeyed my English lord and master. I did take the story myself, and the editor *did* like it—or said that he did. Anyhow, he published it. And after that we wrote together several short stories for *The Strand* before the long series which we called 'The Scarlet Runner'—a name given to many motor-cars since then. I really believe if we hadn't done that little story, 'Midnight and the Man,' written together for *The Strand*, it might never have occurred to us to do 'The Lightning Conductor.'"

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL.

Horace Annesley Vachell, who within a period of twenty years has given us a dozen or more excellent novels, broke into print very easily and successfully.

" Many years ago," he says, " I went down to hunt in Dorsetshire, and the first evening happened to tell a story of life in a mining camp in Colorado. I had just come back from a big-game expedition in Wyoming. Next day I was down with an appalling cold and quite unable to get on a horse, let alone ride him. My host, as he rode off, said: ' Why don't you write that story you told us and send it to some magazine? ' I set to work at once. Miss Frith, daughter of William Powell Frith, the famous painter of ' The Derby Day,' ' Coming of Age in the Olden Days,' and other well-known pictures, read my MS., which I entitled ' Tiny,' and kindly offered to send it to some monthly periodical. Of course I was delighted, and the yarn was sent to Sir Douglas Straight, at that time editor of *The Whitehall Review*. To my immense surprise and pleasure the story was accepted, paid for, and printed. That, I suppose, started the *cacoethes scribendi*. Anyway,

it was the beginning; and the end, I trust, is not yet."

H. DE VERE STACPOOLE.

Before he became a writer of fiction Mr. H. de Vere Stacpoole studied medicine at various English hospitals. On his own showing he was first drawn towards literature by the works of Carlyle and the German metaphysicians and poets. Then he became deeply interested in the French school of writers, and travelled much in France and other countries. For several years he continued his travels and assisted in several deep-sea expeditions, the result of which was a valuable monograph entitled "The Floor of the Sea."

"The first story I ever wrote," he says, "was one called 'Pierrot,' published by John Lane during the 'Yellow Book' era. Aubrey Beardsley did the illustrations and cover design. I remember he was at Dieppe at the time, and *wouldn't* send the drawings in. I had to threaten him, through John Lane, with a shot-gun, and even then they arrived late and delayed the publication. The Beardsley figures

on the cover and end papers of ' Pierrot ' do not represent the characters of the story They represent Beardsley's mind.

" ' Pierrot ' sold moderately—very moderately. A couple of years after it was published you could have bought copies exceedingly cheap. To-day you have to pay ten or fifteen times the published price on account of the Beardsley pictures. I have two copies only. If I had known, and laid in two or three hundredweight, I would have done well—but I never was any good as a speculator.

" After publishing ' Pierrot ' I wrote ' The Blue Lagoon,' which, though not my first book, was my first successful book. I have seen a great deal of sea life, and I have always, as much as possible, mixed with the men who are the real toilers of the sea—the sailors, stokers, engineers, and deep-sea cable hands.

" I got the chief character of ' The Blue Lagoon ' out of the stokehold of a ship. It was south of the Canaries, and I went down to the stokehold to help stoke—for fun—and I met this gentleman, a fellow-Irishman. He believed in fairies.

" You never know what gems you may find in life in the most unexpected places. This person and his fairies presented me, literally,

with a certain amount of success, and now I cannot even stand him a drink in return. He was a good fairy to me. It was a good ship, that, for I captured several more people out of it for fictional purposes."

E. TEMPLE THURSTON.

"I wrote my first novel, 'The Apple of Eden,'" writes Mr. E. Temple Thurston, "when I was seventeen—that is, just nineteen years ago. It shared the fate of most first books—it was refused where most I expected it to be taken, by the only publishing house where I thought I had a friend! I lived in Ireland at the time, and not until I was twenty-one and married did I come to London. There I had no friends at all, and I had started married life on two pounds a week. I was still writing—still with no success. Then, when I was twenty-two, I wrote 'The Apple of Eden' again, not altering the story, but improving the style of it. In the hands of an agent it went from one publisher to another, eventually being published by Chapman and Hall

in England and Dodd, Mead, and Co. in America."

JACK LONDON.

How Jack London " broke into print " is a story which has been told before, but which is well worth the telling again. He himself said that ever since he was eight years old he had been on the hunt for his boyhood. Perhaps he never found it. At fifteen he was a man and had been a " ranchman " for seven years. True, he had had a few months of schooling at two schools, but never remembered ever learning anything at either.

When he went with his people on a Californian ranch, London found time to read Washington Irving's " Alhambra." He wasn't nine then, and he was so fascinated with the book that he wanted to discuss it with the other " ranchmen." But to his dismay they knew nothing about books, and their ignorance shocked him. The hired men lent him dime novels, and as his work was to watch the bees while sitting under a tree from sunrise till late in the afternoon—waiting for the swarming—he had plenty of time to read and dream. His favourite book was Ouida's " Signa," and he

read it over and over again, but never knew the end of the story until he was grown up, for the last chapters were missing.

Then Jack London left the ranch and went to Oakland, where he sold newspapers. He was eleven then, and from that age to sixteen he worked at anything that turned up. The number of occupations which at different times attracted Jack London must have run into many hundreds.

" Then," he said, " the adventure-lust was strong within me, and I left home. I didn't run, I just left—went out in the bay, and joined the oyster pirates. The days of the oyster pirates are now past, and if I had got my dues for piracy I would have been given five hundred years in prison. Oddly enough, my next occupation was on a fish patrol, where I was entrusted with the arrest of any violators of the fishing laws.

" But you want to know how I ' broke into print.' Well, in my fitful days I had written the usual compositions which had been praised in the usual way, and when I got a job in a jute mill I still had an occasional try at writing. One day my mother came to me and said that a prize was being offered in the *San Francisco Call* for a descriptive article. She urged me

to try for it; she knew that I should win it! And to please her I decided to make an attempt, taking as my subject, 'Typhoon off the Coast of Japan.' I was determined to write something with which I was fairly familiar. But I was working thirteen hours a day in the jute mill, and little time was left for composition. Very tired and sleepy, and knowing I had to be up at half-past five, I began the article at midnight and worked straight on until I had written two thousand words, the limit of the article, but with my ideas only half worked out. The next night, under the same conditions, I continued, adding another two thousand words before I finished, and then the third night I spent in cutting out the excess. The first prize came to me, and the second and third went to students of the Stanford and Berkeley Universities. This success seriously turned my thoughts to writing, but my blood was still too hot for a settled routine, so with the exception of a little gush which I sent to the *Call*, and which that journal promptly rejected, I deferred breaking farther into literature until my mind was more fully settled.

"In my nineteenth year I returned to Oakland and entered the High School there. Of course, they had the usual monthly or weekly

magazine—I forget which—and I wrote stories for it, consisting mostly of accounts of my sea and tramping experiences. I stopped there for a year, doing janitor work as a means of livelihood, and then left and was my own schoolmaster for three months, cramming hard in order to enter the University of California. To support myself I took a job in a laundry, and while ironing shirts and singeing collars evolved some of the plots which stood me in good stead in future stories.

"Then I left California and went to the Klondyke to prospect for gold. At the end of a year I was obliged to come out owing to an outbreak of scurvy, and on the homeward journey of nineteen hundred miles in an open boat I made the only notes of the trip. It was in the Klondyke that I found myself. There nobody talks. Everybody thinks. You get your true perspective. I got mine. After returning to California I had a bad stroke of luck. Work was scarce and I had nothing to do. Consequently my thoughts turned again to writing, and I wrote a story called 'Down the River,' which was rejected. While I was waiting for this rejection I wrote a twenty-thousand-word serial for a news company. This was also rejected. But I wasn't dis-

couraged. Just as soon as a manuscript was dispatched I would buckle to and write something else. I often wondered what an editor looked like. I had never seen one, and never at that time had come across anyone who had ever published anything. Then a Californian magazine accepted a short story and sent me five dollars. That was my second success in ' breaking into print.' And when I had received forty dollars for another short story I began to think that things were on the mend, and so they were.

" My first book—my real ' break into print ' —was published in 1900 under the title of ' The Son of the Wolf.' It was something of a success, and I had many offers of newspaper work. But I had sufficient sense to refuse to be a slave to that man-killing machine, for such I hold a newspaper to a young man in his ' faming ' period. Not until I was well on my feet as a magazine writer did I do much work for newspapers. Then it did not matter, for I was not obliged to do more than I cared, and could quit when the spirit moved me to do so. But I do not forget that I first ' broke into print ' through a newspaper, and for that reason I have a kindly feeling towards the Press. I suppose I should have ' broken into print '

some time or another, but I always think it was my mother's faith in me that turned my attention to literature as a profession."

CHARLES GARVICE.

"Strangely enough," wrote Mr. Charles Garvice, "I 'broke into print' with poetry —Heaven save the mark!—and, still more strangely, I was paid for my first production. It was a set of words for a song written by an extremely popular composer. For some time I got quite nice little sums for writing words for music; only the other day I found, in an old portfolio, one or two old songs to which I had written the words; they were very bad—the words, I mean. My first attempt at fiction was a short story, written when I was a boy of nineteen. It appeared in a popular periodical and I received the large sum of seventeen shillings and sixpence for it. I suppose I must have written half a dozen short stories before I tried my hand at a long novel. This was written before I was twenty, ran through the same popular magazine, and had the honour of appearing in three-volume form. The three-decker was beginning to go

out of fashion at that time, and this early novel was the only one of mine published in that somewhat inconvenient, but by no means unprofitable, form.

" I ought to mention that, soon after I ' began author,' by writing words for music, I took on rather a singular job. The proprietor of a couple of weekly periodicals of the goody-goody kind took a trip to Germany, and while there purchased a number of blocks. Of these he gave me some ' pulls,' requesting me to write up the pictures, which were not at all bad illustrations of ruined abbeys, castles, and so on. I was to get ten and sixpence an article —say, of four thousand words—and at first sight it looked to me, in my lamb-like innocence and youthful enthusiasm for any kind of literary work at any kind of price, an easy job ; but I found that few of the pictures had names to them, and I had to go to the British Museum and try to hunt them up. It was a terrible business, and I nearly drove the dear good man who was then superintendent in the Rotunda stark, staring mad ; because he was too conscientious and warm-hearted a fellow to brush aside a youth or refuse to help him. We found two or three of the originals of the blocks, and it was a young lady reader, seated

at the next desk to me, who suggested—the Eve !—that I should invent titles—and histories —for the rest.

"By the way, I have told this story in one of my novels, a recent one ; but I've an idea it's funny enough to repeat here."

ALICE HEGAN RICE.

The authoress of "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch"—Mrs. Alice Hegan Rice—has reached a very large public, not only through her novels, but also by way of the stage, where, ever since their dramatization, "Mrs. Wiggs" and "Lovey Mary" may always be counted upon to draw big crowds of admirers. Mrs. Rice "broke into print" long before the creation of the adorable Mrs. Wiggs, and it came about in rather an amusing way. "It happened when I was a school-girl," writes Mrs. Rice. "I had been reading 'Reveries of a Bachelor,' and, like many another girl of that day, fell a victim to Marvel's charm. So impressed was I with his sage reflections upon love that I was moved to write an article on the same theme from a feminine standpoint.

I called it ' Reveries of a Spinster,' and handed it in as a school theme. It was commended, and someone suggested that I send it to a local newspaper.

" Being inexperienced in submitting manuscripts, I sent it in unsigned and with no return address. To the great delight of myself and my schoolmates it was not only printed, but answered again and again. Old maids and married women kept the controversy going for weeks, the former valiantly defending the writer and the latter indulging in scathing criticism of the seventeen-year-old spinster, who was confidently accused of being embittered by some desperate experience.

" It was many years later that my first book, ' Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch,' was published, and since then six other volumes have appeared, but not one has had a more unexpected and amusing reception than that first modest literary effort."

W. W. JACOBS.

Mr. W. W. Jacobs, the creator of the inimitable Night Watchman, Bob Pretty, Sam Small, Ginger Dick, and a host of other characters

whose sayings and doings he has chronicled for the delight of his readers, writes as follows :

"My first contribution was printed in an amateur magazine when I was about twenty, and for the next few years I was an irregular contributor to various papers. The irregularity was the fault of the editors, who left no stone unturned in their endeavours to induce me to take up some more useful work in my spare time. Then Mr. Jerome K. Jerome published my stories of long-shore life in *To-Day* and *The Idler*, and they were afterwards published in book-form under the title of 'Many Cargoes.' Considering that my first efforts were printed in an amateur magazine, I don't think that the term 'breaking into print' applies to me—'crawling into print' would, perhaps, be nearer the mark."

J. J. BELL.

Mr. J. J. Bell, whose "Wee Macgreegor," "Christina," and many other delightful types of Scottish character have charmed us all, says :

"I was quite old—twenty-four—when I began to write. I think my first printed effort was an 'Ode to a Sausage,' which appeared in

The Glasgow University Magazine—gratis, of course. Then I sent forth four poems (serious) to *The Pall Mall Magazine*, *Chambers's Journal*, *Pearson's Magazine*, and *The Sketch*. They were all accepted ! Then I sent out six others. They were all returned. And so on. . . . The first chapter of ' Wee Macgreegor ' was written in desperation to fill a column which I supplied to *The Glasgow Evening Times* every Friday. People seemed to like it, and I wrote some more. A dozen sketches accumulated ; a little volume seemed a possibility. Only no one wanted to publish it. Eventually I took the risk involved in the production of three thousand copies—a fearsome number ! but there was a saving in taking a quantity. Then I got married, and, three weeks later, the little book was published. And that's all."

JEFFERY FARNOL.

Mr. Jeffery Farnol—whose " Broad Highway " has delighted hundreds of thousands of readers—finds it easier to recall the amount he received for his first story than the story itself. " So far as I can remember after the lapse of nearly twenty years," he says, " my first story was entitled ' Jones, A.B.,' and was published

in an English weekly magazine called *Short Stories*.

"This masterpiece contained, if my memory serves, about two thousand words, and brought me a cheque for the magnificent sum of one guinea. It was a very welcome guinea—the very first yellow sovereign one earns always has, I should think, an especial value—and some of the sentimental members of my family circle were disposed to advise having a hole bored in it and wearing it suspended round my neck. But, alas! it was too valuable to be used as a mere ornament.

"Well, good luck to it! I hope the present possessor of that bright particular sovereign is made as happy by it as I was. I fear your readers will think this has more to do with my first sovereign than my first story, but the two are so intimately associated in my memory that I find it difficult to recall the crudities and faults of the one without a pleasant recollection of the charms of the other—during the brief time of its sojourn with me."

W. PETT RIDGE.

From Mr. Pett Ridge, so well known to readers for his humorous stories of London

life and character, there comes the following most interesting chapter of autobiography :

" A fellow-student at the Birkbeck (then a rabbit-warren of small class-rooms in Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane) made the announcement that he had submitted a turn-over article to *The Globe*. This was, in itself, a painful circumstance ; the situation became intolerable when he was able later to show the contribution in print, and to exhibit the cheque for one guinea that represented payment My own first twenty-one shillings came from *The Globe* a few weeks afterwards.

" The earliest sketch of London life that I wrote was called ' A Dinner in Soho,' and I sent it to *St. James's Gazette*, of which journal Sidney Low was the editor. I was, at the time, chief clerk in a Continental office in the City, and I never shall forget the day when, hurrying along Cannon Street to lunch, I caught sight of the title on the *St. James's* placard ; excepting in my dreams I have rarely found a moment of success equal to this. Sidney Low being the wisest and friendliest editor a young penman could have encountered, I took advantage of the fact by forwarding sketches weekly, and by sending him also stories, typewritten and under a pen-name—because I

feared he might suspect I had an intention of writing the whole of the journal—and dispatched from a town address.

"I remember that on one great Saturday evening the *St. James's* had a sketch initialled 'W. P. R.,' and a story signed by my pseudonym of 'Warwick Simpson.' The same double event frequently took place in a Manchester paper. I have still in my possession a letter from the editor of that journal replying to an application for increased payment for the stories which were appearing over my own name: 'When you can send us stuff as good as that contributed to our columns by Mr. Warwick Simpson—stories which you have, doubtless, noticed and read—we shall be prepared to reconsider your request.'

"Being a bachelor, and fairly youthful, my first novel dealt with the problems of married life, and how to solve them. It was called 'A Clever Wife,' and it went to half a dozen publishers; Mr. Heinemann thought so little of it (and I am sure he was right) that he sent back to me, in its place, a dashing novel by a lady member of the aristocracy. When the error had been corrected I packed the scrip afresh and sent it to Bentley's. In a fortnight's time the parcel returned; with it a letter of

several sheets, written by Mr. Bentley in his own hand. The early pages were devoted to the task of pointing out defects in the novel, and I remember I was becoming aggrieved by the elaborate manner, when I came to the last paragraph : ' If you can see your way to making the alterations suggested, I shall be happy to publish the novel.' The firm gave up work shortly afterwards ; it is only fair to say that the amount paid to me for royalties could scarcely have been a factor in hastening the end.

" Harper published the book in America, but the occurrence did not make the sensation there that a new civil war would have created. I recall, however, the great kindness of Mr. W. D. Howells in this connection and his generous appreciation during later days. It is not his fault, but mine, that remittances which come to me from New York sometimes fail to equal the amount of my tobacconist's bill.

" Take it altogether, it is a fine life, and a jolly one. I have been writing now for a good many years, and to be candid, I prefer the work to the alternative, usually offered, of sweeping a crossing. If I am asked to give advice to anyone about to ' break into print,' my counsel

to the 'prentice hand (offered, I hope, without presumption) will be to stay in an office, or other regular occupation, until he feels he can well afford to leave. In my own case, I wrote half a dozen novels before I took off paper cuffs and said good-bye to the City."

THE BOOK I SHALL NEVER WRITE

A Symposium of Authors on a Delightful and Suggestive Idea

BERNARD SHAW.

I have no time for hoping. I have written more books than I ever expected to write. I do not keep my goods in my heart. What is the shop window for, pray ?

J. J. BELL.

It is a pathetic but not tragic thought—that book which I shall never write. Tragic, however, is the thought of those books which I wish I had never written.

HUGH WALPOLE.

I can only say that the book I have hoped to write and know that I never shall write is the book as I see it before me just before I begin to write it.

E. F. BENSON.

The book which I mean to write and never will has neither narrative nor description of

any kind in it, and I don't think even the names of the characters ever appear. They reveal themselves, their marvellously complicated and wonderful natures, and the whole dramatic situation with its astounding *dénouement* entirely by what they say. The book will be of immense length, and nobody will be able to lay it down till he has finished it. The social, economical, political, mental, physical, and spiritual life of England will stand still for that period.

IAN HAY.

Most authors cherish a dream of breaking away one day from routine and writing something immortal on some great, new, and hitherto unconquered subject. But they never do. The reason is that their readers will not allow it. Your steady novel-reader does not like to have his oats changed. Once he has decided what you are—a realist, or a feminist, or a humorist, or what not—he sees to it that you remain humbly and reverently in that station to which *Vox Populi* has appointed you, and continue to turn out realism or feminism or humour at regular intervals and current rates. In my own case, I find I am expected

to produce narratives dealing with the common joys and sorrows of ordinary people—particularly young people—treated from the angle of a would-be humorous philosophy. If I were suddenly to launch out as a destructive realist —by which I mean a writer who conducts his followers into one of the many deep tragedies of existence and leaves them there without troubling to indicate any way out ; or if I were to join that frankly morbid school of soul-dissectors and sex-analysts who are enjoying (so far as they appear capable of enjoying anything) so great a vogue to-day, I should be inundated with protests from people I had disappointed—either parents and guardians, who have hitherto approved of me because they have not found it necessary to wade through each succeeding work of mine before passing it on to the family, or old-fashioned persons (not necessarily old) who still believe, with Dr. Johnson, that a book should help us " either to enjoy life or to endure it." These would say that I had betrayed them, and I should feel on the whole inclined to agree.

Yes, we story-tellers are all in the same boat, except the few, the immortals. They can write of what they like—Hamlet, Falstaff, Lear,

or Bottom the Weaver—and there are no complaints.

Still, that does not prevent us from *wanting* to achieve some pet story-telling ambition. Personally I should like to write an Anglo-American novel which would be equally sympathetic and equally intelligible to English and Americans ; which would do for the English-speaking world something of what Rudyard Kipling has done for the British Empire. A tremendous task ; I, for one, can never hope to compass it. But I hope that some day someone will arise who can.

CLEMENCE DANE.

Oh, what a dreadful question in holiday time ! I don't think I ever really considered the subject, because, you know, one lives in the book of the moment, to some extent. I can tell you what I always say I should dearly love to write, though I don't suppose I shall ever manage it, and that is a really good fairy story for children. I'd rather have written " Alice in Wonderland " than any novel since Jane Austen. And oh, how I envy the authors of " The Golden Age " and " The Phœnix and the Carpet " !

THOMAS BURKE.

The idea is interesting. I think the book I would like to write would be a big, jolly book, ten sizes larger than life, which should cover every phase of London life and include characters representative of every phase. It should be comically gigantesque ; twenty novels in one ; twenty biographies ; not mere outlines, but full, clustering records. It should be full of love of the earth and of mankind, but it should show things as they are ; it should present everything and pardon everything. In short, such a book would be Shakespeare, Fielding, Dickens, Rabelais, Balzac, Browning, and Meredith in collaboration.

SIR HENRY NEWBOLT.

I don't like answering your painful question. I live on hope, and cannot give up even my imaginary children for dead. You apply the thumb-screw ; it hurts horribly and I squeak ; but I do not confess. Even if I did, I might turn out to be wrong, after all. " If hopes be dupes, fears may be liars," and what a fool I should look if the book, which I had given up for lost, were to come home some day and go about in society. The discredit

would extend even to your otherwise admirable article.

MRS. C. N. WILLIAMSON.

Of course there's a book of my heart; and it's in my heart, where, alas! it is likely to stay, without ever seeing the light. You see, it has grown so big and round that it fits into every heart-interstice; therefore it could only be extricated with a pickaxe and hammer, while the walls of my heart fell into ruins all around it.

After that preface, you will be surprised to hear that it isn't a love-story; that is, not above all a love-story, though love runs through it, as it does in all *real* stories. It's a book about London.

In it are packed all the splendid and happy, sordid and sad, mysterious and wonderful things that I have felt and found out about London. For years I have collected learned volumes about London, thinking that they might "come in useful," but after all, if I were to write my book, I fancy I should hardly use them. I should use only the notes stored away in my own heart, where—alas for me!—I fear they'll always stay.

H. DE VERE STACPOOLE.

I would like to write a book about what happens to a man and a woman after they are dead and if they die in the true faith—in short, if they are lovers—or if they were lovers, I suppose I ought to put it, for the accepted opinion seems to be that death is a sort of divorce court. I am sick of hearing that the soul of man is immortal from people who accept the idea that love is mortal.

W. J. LOCKE.

Yes, I've toyed with the idea of a book that will never, I fear, be written, for years beyond number—written round an early seventeenth-century French figure, who, oddly enough, has never been exploited by my tribe. I can't give away my secret thunder, for someone cleverer than myself will steal it and I shall be bereaved of my beautiful unwritten book. Besides—who knows ?—it may be the solace of my senile years !

G. K. CHESTERTON.

I can assure you that the work I should like to do, and never shall, is more like a library

than a book. Besides the books I should like to write, there are even more that I should like other people to write. There is a story about a man who manufactured a climate, which I have set down for Mr. H. G. Wells; and one about Queen Victoria and Lord Melbourne, which is awaiting the attention of Mr. Max Beerbohm. What I should really like to write would be a true romance of the Middle Ages, in which a reasonable amount of fighting and killing should be combined with some faint comprehension of what men thought worth fighting for, and how they felt about having to die. For instance, the Franciscans in Flanders preached against people very like modern pessimists; the fight between St. Francis and Schopenhauer would go down to the roots, if religion were neither ignored nor patronized. But it would need the learning of Flaubert, or of Mr. Wells's forthcoming work on the climate-maker. Such a lot of science is needed for such a little art.

ROBERT HICHENS.

The book one is always going to write but never succeeds in writing! In looking back over a fairly long career as an author I have

sought in my memory for that legendary book. Did I ever have wonderful dreams of the masterpiece which would carry my name to the ends of the earth? Did I ever feel I had it in me to create a work which would become a classic in my lifetime? Whenever I sat down to begin a new book did I say to myself, "This will be the greatest novel ever written?"

If I am to be strictly honest and sincere—I don't think I ever did.

A great deal of nonsense is thought and expressed about writers. Some people seem to imagine that no well-known author ever takes up his pen without being "inspired." Others evidently suppose that books write themselves, that the man or woman with a certain "gift of invention" has only to sit in front of a writing-table and that a first-rate book immediately "comes." I wish it did come. But most of us have to fetch it. If the public knew how much labour many books have cost their authors, they would probably be astonished.

Tolstoi's eldest daughter once told me that one of her father's works—I think it was "Master and Man"—had been written and rewritten, typed and retyped, about thirty

times before he let it go to the printer. Flaubert used to sit for days over a paragraph. Were these men dreaming of masterpieces? Perhaps they were. They certainly created them, but at a great cost.

Sometimes a writer who wishes to do his best thinks about a subject for a long time before he feels ready to work on it. I had the idea of "The Garden of Allah" in my mind for several years before I wrote a word of the book. I longed to begin it, but I felt that the moment had not come, that I was not capable of treating the theme which was haunting me as I wished to treat it. Nevertheless, I don't remember thinking that "The Garden of Allah" was going to be my masterpiece. I merely wished to write it as well as I was able to, to spare no pains on its creation!

Writers no doubt are sometimes fortunate people and receive many compliments. I have had some left-handed ones. Quite recently I was at a big tennis tournament, where I met a rather well-known man, who told me he had been at the first night of "The Garden of Allah" at Drury Lane Theatre.

"How long did the play run?" he continued.

I told him it had run for nearly ten months.

"Well, you made a great mistake!" he rejoined.

"What was that?" said I.

"You could easily have turned it into another 'Chu Chin Chow.' You should have written it up a bit, made it more lively, and brought in some songs and dances. When I saw it I said, 'This is another "Chu Chin Chow"—with a little care.'"

Thus are writers occasionally chastened, lest perchance they should have too good a conceit of themselves.

But I am getting away from the subject of the book the writer dreams of but never writes.

What more can I say about that?

Really I can only say that I have written several books very much as I intended to write them. No doubt they might have been far better if someone else had written them. But that, unfortunately, can't be helped. One does what one can. I prefer writing what I can write to dreaming of extraordinary masterpieces which neither I nor anyone else will ever write.

I fear I am very prosaic, though it never occurred to me to suggest to Miss Mary Anderson that she and I might liven up "The Garden of Allah."

BOOKS THAT FORM MIND AND CHARACTER

For the purposes of this Symposium it was suggested that the Bible might be omitted as accepted. The idea was to obtain suggestions of books of high formative value in literary, philosophical, and ethical fields.

SIR WILLIAM ROBERTSON NICOLL, Editor of "The British Weekly."

I should recommend Emerson's Essays above all, and some of Carlyle's earlier Essays should also be read. "Sartor Resartus" is very beneficial, but also very difficult.

BERNARD SHAW.

It would depend on the capacity of the young man. My own books, for example, have helped some young people and got others into prison. The Roman Catholic Church imagines that the Bible is a very dangerous book, and should not be placed in the hands of the laity without careful discrimination by a spiritual adviser. All books of any import-

ance are dangerous in the same way. They will persuade one reader to forgive his (or her) enemies, and incite another to burn witches. Nietzsche was a saint, but his works have been made a Bible for Bullies. A book is what the mind of its reader makes it ; and there is no book that has the same effect on everyone.

ST. LOE STRACHEY, late Editor of "The Spectator."

Assuming the Bible barred, and also Shakespeare, who must be " taken as read " by any person not mentally afflicted, the books which I should give the young man of your thought are : (1) Boswell's " Life of Johnson," (2) Wordsworth's works, including his two great war pamphlets, (3) " The Dialogues of Plato " (Jowett's translation).

I must add that, in my opinion, while if he read them for pleasure they would do him all the good in the world, if he read them as a task they would not be of the slightest value. It is only books that are read with appetite, and so with enjoyment, that do a man good. It is notorious that few people can read a book on advice. They must pick the apple from the tree themselves, or it will be sure to seem sour.

JOSEPH McCABE, the Author of "The Principles of Evolution."

My long experience prompts me to say: First catch your young man of twenty-one who will take a moral tonic. However, we will suppose that you have caught some. You then surely need to discriminate. To one I would give Nietzsche's "Thus Spake Zarathustra," to another Marcus Aurelius, to a third Emerson, to a fourth Lamb's Essays, and so on. If one must name three books in a general way, I should name (1) Maeterlinck's "Buried Temple," (2) Arnold Bennett's "Human Machine," (3) Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus." What moved and most deeply influenced me when I was twenty-one was "Faust." But one has a new atmosphere to consider.

THE RT. HON. J. M. ROBERTSON.

The point you put to me about a book or books which would tend to form advantageously both the "mind and character" of a youth of twenty-one is a difficult one. Men react very variously to a given stimulus.

Speaking practically, I should say that Emerson's Essays, and notably that on "Self-

Reliance," would in most cases have a tonic effect, both on mind and character—in so far as we can make a distinction between the ideas.

In the same way, most young minds of fairly good quality would respond healthfully to the key of a good biography. Trevelyan's " Life of Macaulay " always seems to me to have a tonic quality.

But that, and perhaps also Boswell's " Johnson " and Lockhart's " Scott," may be held to appeal mainly to minds with a literary bent; and perhaps some would say the same even of a " sovereign balm " like Lamb's " Essays of Elia." The objection, however, would hardly be made to the Essays of Bacon, which I should prescribe as valid for both kinds of influence in view. Some famous didactic books—for instance, Carlyle's " Heroes "—become visibly vitiated by the unsound elements in them. But there is singularly little of that sort in the Essays of Bacon.

Here, however, I am nonplussed by the reflection that a fairly educated youth of twenty-one should already have read all the books I have mentioned—at least, those I have stressed. He should also have read Mill's " Liberty," which, you will remember, made

Kingsley, by his own account, a better man on the spot.

Trying, then, to offer something which the youth of twenty-one is less likely to have read, I might suggest, with an eye to differences of temperament, a choice of some such different books as (1) Spencer's "Data of Ethics," (2) Browning's "The Ring and the Book," (3) Voltaire's "Candide." Each and all, I conceive, might have a very sanative influence on mind and character.

The Late LORD LEVERHULME.

The books I would place in the hands of a young man of twenty-one, in the belief that they would tend to form both his mind and character to his lifelong advantage, would be Smiles's "Self-Help" and a book of Harry Clifton's songs; I am thinking of one in particular—viz., "Paddle Your Own Canoe."

A. G. GARDINER.

It is a hard question you put, but I think I would give your supposititious young man (1) Shakespeare, to awaken his imagination; (2) Thucydides, to reveal to him the springs

of human action ; (3) a Life of Lincoln (Charnwood's, for example), to show him the highest standard of public conduct ; (4) Ruskin's " Crown of Wild Olive," " Unto this Last," and " Sesame and Lilies " to form his ethical and social sense.

SIR OWEN SEAMAN, Editor of " Punch."

I think that perhaps the most illuminating book that I remember to have read in my young days was Lessing's " Laocoon."

GORDON SELFRIDGE.

If the man has never read, it becomes necessary to start him with quite simple books which will hold his attention and not necessitate too great thought. With these almost juvenile books in England I am not familiar ; but if he has done some reading, and therefore has a mind which can grasp printed matter in book form without too great an effort, I should recommend books written as simply as possible describing the lives of great men such as Napoleon, Alexander the Great, Gustavus Adolphus ; and I should follow this with such books as Prescott's " Conquest of Mexico,"

Mrs. Steel's " India Throughout the Ages," and perhaps Lew Wallace's " Ben Hur." As he becomes more familiar and at home with the printed page, I should introduce to him the standard works of fiction of Thackeray, Scott, George Eliot, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Robert Louis Stevenson, etc. If, after he had read a dozen or so of such books as above described, he had not acquired the habit of reading, I should make up my mind that God did not intend him to be informed in literature.

FATHER BERNARD VAUGHAN.

Without personal acquaintance with the individual it seems a little presumptuous to recommend him to read certain books.

But no harm can be done by suggesting for his study (1) Liddon's " Divinity of Christ," (2) Devas's " Key to the World," (3) Windle's " Church and Science," (4) Cobbett's " Protestant Reformation " (C.T.S.). One cannot leave out Christianity, which was the making of England. The merit of the books with my recommendation is that they are not a conspiracy against the truth, nor a libel on history.

DR. RUSSELL WELLS, Vice-Chancellor of the University of London.

The only way of answering your question that seems to me in the least satisfactory is to put the question in another form : " What book coming into your hands about this period of life do you consider had the greatest influence in tending to form your mind and character to your lifelong advantage, and, looking back now with fuller experience, would you recommend it to one trained and circumstanced like you were then, or what other book would you choose ? " Put in this form, I have no hesitation in saying Sir Thomas Browne's " Religio Medici," and that I would change it for no other.

SIR OLIVER LODGE.

I myself found Smiles's " Self-Help " stimulating and helpful, and conducive to hard work and utmost economy of time, i.e., strenuous utilization of its odd moments. Another good book is called " Being and Doing."

SIR JAMES HENRY YOXALL.

For a single book I recommend Matthew Arnold's " Prose Passages " ; for the other

two books, his " Essays in Criticism " and his " Culture and Anarchy."

I recommend these because, in my own adolescence and young manhood, I found them to suggest and supply those needs which I have since been able to recognize more fully as being particular, and perhaps peculiar, to the English type of mind. Not without reason did Matthew Arnold plead for " sweetness and light," for Swift says that they are the " two noblest things," and no writer in English has so well expressed their meaning as Matthew Arnold does.

SIR LEO CHIOZZA MONEY, the well-known Publicist.

I do not care to name any two or three books, but here is a choice of eight, and my reasons for thinking why each would help a young Englishman.

(1) Shakespeare. To enjoy and worthily to employ his own beautiful language in fine thought and expression.

(2) Darwin's " Descent of Man." To understand his relation to the organic world.

(3) Sir Robert Ball's " Story of the Heavens." To comprehend what is known of the cosmos.

(4) Carlyle's " Past and Present." To ponder the meaning of progress.

(5) Ruskin's " Unto this Last " and (6) " Munera Pulveris." To know that a true economy cannot be unmoral.

(7) Wells's " Outline of History." To view broadly the march of humanity towards an unknown but hopeful horizon.

(8) " Riches and Poverty." To realize the struggle with poverty.

And all these things are essential to salvation.

GENERAL BOOTH.

I HAVE many "favourites." Among them in some of my public work I use very frequently Charlotte Elliott's "Just as I am." It expresses a union of truth and faith with emotion which is quite unusual, and which makes almost a universal appeal. In another class of effort Faber's most tender and eloquent verses "The Christ of God is Crucified" have always greatly stirred me.

In my personal experience Charles Wesley's glorious poem beginning "Would Jesus have the sinner die?" maintains its influence and charm after sixty years. Surely in one verse "deep calls to deep" in the heart of every true disciple of Jesus Christ:

Oh let Thy love my heart constrain,
Thy love for every sinner free:
That every fallen soul of man
May taste the Grace that found out me:
That all mankind with me may prove
Thy sovereign, everlasting love.

PREBENDARY CARLILE, Founder of the Church Army.

As paraffin penetrates the iron bar, so music and poetry can get through the hardest hearts where oratory has not succeeded. Where light fails, love can win. Hymns are wings that can carry us over mountains of sorrows and sufferings.

Next to "Abide with me" (Lyte), the following move me most:

(1) "Lead, kindly Light" (Newman).
(2) "Jesu, Lover of my soul" (Wesley).
(3) "Sun of my soul" (Keble).
(4) "Rock of Ages" (Toplady).

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

I think "Lead, kindly Light," is a beautiful hymn. Also several of the hymns sung in Spiritualistic services, especially "Oh Death, where is thy sting?" and "God keep you safely till we meet once more."

ARTHUR MACHEN, the distinguished Essayist.

In the matter of hymns, I will begin in the manner of Miss Arabella Allen, who mightn't know what she liked, but very distinctly knew what she didn't like.

In the first place, then, I detest and despise what used to be called " the singing psalms," such feeble and redundant twaddle as :

> As pants the hart for cooling streams,
> When heated in the chase,
> So longs my soul for Thee, O God,
> And Thy refreshing grace.

A bad day for the people, when they ceased to sing :

Like as the hart desireth the water brooks : so longeth my soul after Thee, O God,

choosing in its place the drivel of Tate and Brady, wedded to a tune like a bad stomach-ache.

Yet it is possible to versify the Psalms nobly : " O God, our Help in ages past," and " The King of Love my Shepherd is," are old and new examples of the right way.

The finest hymns are, most of them, in Latin.

LORD RIDDELL.

In reply to your question as to which is my favourite hymn, I regard " O God, our Help in ages past " as the finest in the English language. It has an optimistic tone,

whereas " Abide with me " is only suitable for funerals.

HENRY W. NEVINSON, Journalist and War Correspondent.

The hymns which, together with music-hall songs, have, unfortunately, taken the place of the old folk-songs in England, are seldom beautiful except by association and by the beauty of their tunes. They are sometimes disgusting, as for instance, " There is a fountain filled with blood."

For beauty of sense and expression I suppose the best are Cowper's " God moves in a mysterious way " ; Charles Wesley's " When I survey the wondrous Cross " ; and Cardinal Newman's " Praise to the Holiest in the height." Perhaps I should add " O God, our Help in ages past," if the Ulster " loyalists " had not coupled it up with the National Anthem, to which it is so much superior.

For myself, my favourite hymn from boyhood has been Newman's " Lead, kindly Light." But I have loved it only for the lines :

> O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent till
> The night is gone ;

for these words call up a picture of the country I have always most delighted in.

MARTIN SHAW, Organist at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields.

Of course, the old plainsong office hymns and sequences are unequalled, but most people don't know them. I will try to keep on fairly common ground.

Among my favourite hymns are Mr. Chesterton's flaming "O God of earth and altar," with its English traditional tune "King Lynn" (English Hymnal 562); The Pilgrim Song of John Bunyan (E.H. 402); The Easter Hymn (E.H. 614) "*Adeste Fideles*" (E.H. 614); and "Christians, awake" (E.H. 21).

I often suspect myself of being a "highbrow," but I think I am just saved by my liking for the three last-named hymns.

Then there is the Old Hundredth and St. Anne, with the gathering notes (E.H. 365 and 450); Tallis's third-mode melody (E.H. 92); "When I survey" (Rockingham), with my brother Geoffrey's Fauxbourdon (Songs of Praise 397); Clifford Bax's "Turn back, O Man," with its old psalm tune (Songs of Praise 197); Vaughan Williams's tune to

" For all the Saints " (E.H. 641); George Herbert's paraphrase of the 23rd Psalm to the tune of " University " (E.H. 93); The Passion Chorale (E.H. 102); and " Herzliebster Jesu " (E.H. 70).

The general public don't think about " good " or " bad " in matters of art. All they want is humanity, and they will accept good or bad art with indifference, if it be human.

Now the tunes I have given as my favourites all seem to me to contain humanity of a vital, tender, and dignified kind.

The humanity of the tunes generally sung to " Abide with me," " Lead, kindly Light," " Fight the good fight," and many other favourite hymns of that period seems to me to be fulsome and gushing, cheap and lowering.

That is why I do not include " Abide with me," which I should have thought more appropriate to a home for the dying than for the Wembley Tattoo.

STACY AUMONIER.

For four and a half years, whilst I was at a public school, I was made to attend chapel twice a day. I heard all the hymns over and over again. The only result now is, I'm afraid,

that if I hear a hymn I simply feel that I want to scream.

Hymns appear to me to be, for the most part, rather foolish words set to trite and commonplace music. That they affected me profoundly at the time I must acknowledge. But looking back on it, I see that they stirred me at the wrong angle. They used to produce in me a feeling which I can only describe as a kind of drunken ego-centricity. Under their narcotic, encouraged by the drone of the organ, I used to visualize myself as rich and successful. They never affected my religious feelings in any way. I suppose I must have been a horrid boy.

CLEMENT SHORTER.

With reference to your inquiry as to one's favourite hymns, I confess that hymns have always had an attraction for me. It is in that that a man does not escape his early training, and mine was in that Nonconformist world in which hymns and prayers abound. I count, however, to-day, that nothing but harm is done by a very large section of the hymns which are favourites with vast masses of well-

intentioned people—what I may call the sanguinary hymns in particular. One commences :

> My Jesus to know
> And to feel His blood flow
> Is life everlasting
> Eternal below,

and the even more familiar :

> There is a fountain filled with blood.

A vast number of Christian hymns, however, have a certain sensuous value in quickening the pulse of life, and it is impossible to hear "Abide with me," "Hark, the herald angels sing," and a hundred others, without emotion. "Who rises from prayer a better man—his prayer is answered" has an application to hymns.

My own favourite hymns, however, are only, I think, to be found in the South Place Chapel Hymn Book, a copy of which came into my possession on those rare occasions when I went to hear Mr. Moncure Conway discourse on Emerson, Carlyle, or some such topics. The hymns that I like are the following :

> Though wandering in a stranger-land,
> Though on the waste no altar stand,
> Take comfort ! thou art not alone
> While Faith hath marked thee for her own.

I do not know who the author may have been. It was probably by W. J. Fox. He was Mr. Conway's predecessor at South Place, and "selected" this hymn book. My other favourite hymn is by a familiar poet, John Greenleaf Whittier :

Oh sometimes glimpses on my sight
Through present wrong the eternal right ;
And step by step since time began,
I see the steady gain of man :

Through the harsh noises of our day,
A low sweet prelude finds its way ;
Through clouds of doubt and creeds of fear
A light is breaking calm and clear.

ARNOLD BENNETT.

I have not many preferences in hymns. I so seldom hear hymns. I should say that I like best "When I survey the wondrous Cross." I certainly do not much care for "Abide with me" ; the words seem to me to be poor. The music also. But it has a great effect in church or chapel of a Sunday evening. Dr. Watts was the finest hymn-writer, when he was at his best, but he was not often at his best. A beautiful hymn is Cowper's "God moves in a mysterious way." Most of the

good hymns are spoilt by bad tunes, and most of the good tunes are spoilt by bad hymns.

SIR HARRY LAUDER.

" Jesu, Lover of my soul," my first hymn at Sunday-school. We hae a' to gang awa' ; and I feel I have something to look forward to in the above.

SIR J. C. W. REITH.

It is difficult to tell of my favourite hymns, for I have so many, and the best are not hymns at all, but some of the Psalms in the Scottish Metrical version. As for hymns proper, my favourites are grouped under two categories—those written specially for the young, with all the happy associations of childhood, and those for the Communion Service in particular or of somewhat similar sense in general.

In the former category out of about twenty favourites I would place first, " I think when I read that sweet story of old " ; in the second group, " When I survey the wondrous Cross." But it is only with a struggle that I refrain

from mentioning half a dozen other beautiful hymns, appealing to the finest feelings of manhood.

Above all, however, for me are some of the Scottish Metrical Psalms, with the 23rd as first, though here again it is difficult not to specify others, both Psalms and Paraphrases, the sentiments of which are the backbone of Scottish character. The Metrical Psalms are of course inseparable from their magnificent tunes, and what they may lack in literary style is amply compensated by the grandeur of their sentiments.

SIR ALMERIC FITZROY, late Clerk to the Privy Council.

The criteria of excellence for religious verse lie in emotional expression and metrical charm, the best examples of which must be sought in the rhymed compositions of mediæval Latin.

Of the hymns now in use few appeal to my sense of beauty. But I might mention among these the "*Adeste Fideles*," again in the Latin version, the hymns of Cardinal Newman, "Lead, kindly Light," and "Praise to the Holiest in the height," and the radiant Epiphany song, "Brightest and best of the Sons of the Morning."

LADY MARGARET SACKVILLE.

My favourite hymn—not, as far as I know, included in any hymnary, though it might well be—is Donne's " A Hymn to God the Father." The first verse runs thus :

> Wilt Thou forgive the sin where I begun,
> Which was my sin though it was done before ?
> Wilt Thou forgive that sin through which I run,
> And do run still, though still I do deplore ?
> When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done,
> For I have more.

The whole poem seems to me a very noble expression of penitence.

THE REV. J. A. NAIRN, Headmaster of Merchant Taylors School.

The hymns which I prefer are, partly, those translated from Latin or Greek, specimens of which may be found in Moorsom's " Historical Companion to Hymns Ancient and Modern," and, partly, more recent hymns. I appreciate the older hymns, for it interests me to remember that they have been used for many generations, and they are endeared to us by associations of past history. Among these translations of earlier hymns are " Jerusalem the Golden,"

and " Oh, what the joy and the glory must be " (both by Neale), but I prefer the latter in the original Latin, by Abelard.

In the choice of more recent hymns, I am chiefly influenced by simplicity and sincerity ; but, here again, old associations enter into the choice. I would name as among my favourite hymns, " Praise to the Holiest in the height," and " Lead, kindly Light," both by Cardinal Newman ; " Jesu, Lover of my soul," by Charles Wesley ; and among hymns sung at Holy Communion, " And now, O Father, mindful of Thy love," by William Bright ; but I feel that the choice of hymns is essentially a matter of individual taste.

SIR ERNEST WILD, Recorder of London.

My favourite hymns are five, viz. :
" Lead, kindly Light."
" Abide with me."
" New every morning is the love."
" Eternal Father, strong to save."
" The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended."

These five seem to me to express man's relationship to his Maker, while, unlike so many other hymns, they are poetry.

SIR E. MARSHALL HALL, K.C.

I will break my rule of not replying to requests of the kind you make in this particular instance. Personally, I feel that the well-known hymn, " Lead, kindly Light," is such a perfect expression of what I believe to be real religion, independent of Creed or Church, that I have no hesitation in selecting it as the one that has had the most influence upon me.

HANNEN SWAFFER, Journalist and Critic.

No single volume has ever made such an impression on my life as " Hymns Ancient and Modern." I do not even exclude the Bible, for, as an old Anglican choirboy, I know it so much better, even than the Psalms. It is impossible even to glance through the index of first lines without feeling profound emotions restored, without recalling many times of doubt and days of triumphant belief.

The Anglican hymns are part of the very being of millions of people, even if they no longer go to church. No alteration in the Prayer Book, however stupid, can change them in any way. They are the most priceless heritage of the Church.

I join with most people, of course, in thinking

that " Lead, kindly Light," " Nearer, my God, to Thee," " Abide with me," and " O God, our Help in ages past," are the most helpful hymns ever written ; but there are the scores of others that I still remember by heart.

Some of the new-fangled tunes they are trying to force on us in Westminster Abbey annoy me frequently, because they are destroying the perfect harmony, in my memory, between words and music.

I hope they will leave the Harvest Hymns alone, and all the wondrous tunes we sing at Eastertide and Christmas. " Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear," " Hushed was the evening hymn," " The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended," " Art thou weary, art thou languid ? " " Fair waved the golden corn," " Far from my Heavenly Home," " Our Blest Redeemer ere He breathed "—in these, as in scores of others, there is an eternal solace and comfort.

ARTHUR BOURCHIER, Actor and Producer.

You ask me to tell you what my favourite hymn is. With pleasure. My favourite hymn is called " England, Arise." The words are by Edward Carpenter, and I love it because it expresses in beautiful words and to the accom-

paniment of lovely music my own feelings on this our life. It is a beautiful expression of my religion, that of raising England where she is miserable and ugly to where she will be happy and beautiful, and where she is now happy and beautiful to still greater happiness, still greater beauty.

The hymn to which Mr. Bourchier refers is entirely modern, being from Mr. Edward Carpenter's volume of poems, " Sketches from Life." Here is the first verse :

ENGLAND, ARISE !

England, arise ! The long, long night is o'er,
Faint in the east behold the dawn appear ;
Out of your evil dream of toil and sorrow
Arise, O England, for the day is here.
From your fields and hills,
Hark ! the answer swells :
Arise, O England, for the day is here.

ST. JOHN ADCOCK, Editor of " The Bookman."

Hymns that have a bad influence on me are those which cry for or give thanks for mercy. To sit in an old church listening to that part of the service which wailingly reiterates " Lord have mercy upon us," and to think how that abject, miserable groan has echoed round its

walls all down the ages, fills me with horror. Praise, thanksgiving, pleas for help, for strength, confessions of error and penitence—these in a hymn are seemly and right, but the dreadful clamour for mercy carries implications of a vengeful, threatening Deity who must be flattered, placated, melted to a merciful mood before He will forgive, and seems barbarous and unworthy. All hymns are not good for all times, of course, but at different times I have been greatly influenced by such as " Sun of my soul," old Bishop Ken's " All praise to Thee, my God, this night," by " Abide with me," " Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah," " Lead, kindly Light," and Ebenezer Eliot's " When wilt Thou save the people ? "

H. M. BATEMAN, the Humorous Artist.

The popularity or appeal of a hymn must, I think, be governed by the spiritual needs, to a large extent, of the moment. Nevertheless there are certain hymns which lay hold of one and remain as fixed favourites in the mind, no matter what the occasion.

In my own case I have no hesitation in saying that " Eternal Father, strong to save," is my choice. Why this should be so I can

hardly say, as I have never been very closely connected with the sea and the work it entails.

But the words in this hymn have a sense and significance not always to be found in certain others, which are yet a pleasure to sing, and it may also be the, to my mind, very tuneful setting it is given.

VIOLET VANBRUGH.

My favourite hymns are " Abide with me " and " And now, O Father, mindful of the love." I don't think for any special association or reason—except that they are beautiful.

FAY COMPTON.

I think my favourite hymn is the Easter " On the Resurrection morning." But it is difficult to make a choice.

W. PETT RIDGE.

My preference is for the jolly, hopeful exhilarating hymn. As for instance : " Brightly gleams our banner, pointing to the sky."

W. L. COURTNEY, Bookman and Critic.

I have told elsewhere the story of how one or two learned gentlemen agreed to select a

body of hymns which would at once be reverential and literary. If I remember right, the invitation came from the Master of Balliol, Mr. Jowett, he and others agreeing to bring forward a collection of hymns which they were prepared to recommend. When the learned party met again it was discovered that they had all brought only one hymn: "O God, our Help in ages past." This, in their judgment, alone fulfilled the conditions to be desired and was in itself a fine piece of literature.

If I am asked what I think on this matter, my reply would be precisely that of the learned gentlemen to whom I have referred. "O God, our Help in ages past," is at all events the only hymn that can be accepted without demur by those who are equally interested in literature and religion. But I should like to add Newman's great hymn, "Lead, kindly Light," although, of course, this is not congregational in its character and is better fitted for personal religion.

SIR DAN GODFREY, the Famous Conductor.

My view is that, whilst I recognize the popularity and effectiveness of "Abide with me," as sung in mass, I shall welcome the time

when sugary hymns of the part-song type are replaced by such as " For all the Saints," by Vaughan Williams, which is in the English Hymnal and possesses dignity and nobility.

E. B. OSBORN, Literary Editor of "The Morning Post."

It is difficult, I find, to say how much the appeal of a hymn depends on the intrinsic merits of words and tune and how much on what Ruskin called " the beauty of memorial." In my own case I cannot disentangle the threads of preference. " Holy, Holy, Holy ! " is the hymn I like best of all, because the words and music seem to me to convey a sense of other-worldly majesty and beauty—in itself such as we might expect to behold with the soul's eye at our journey's end along the " Mystic Way " of Faith. " Rock of Ages," a collect in verse with a tune to match its mass and momentum, comes next in my estimation. It is only in moments of depression when " Pride rules the will " no more, that I care for " Lead, kindly Light," which seems a confession of weakness, of that tired feeling, which God, Who collaborates with man, can hardly care for.

H. GREENHOUGH SMITH, Editor of "The Strand Magazine."

When I was a child of eight or nine I was in church one Sunday while a hymn was being sung in which I took no interest. My eyes fell idly on the next hymn on the page before me, and I began to read it. In a moment all was changed. Mysteriously, I felt a thrill—the first I ever felt in reading verse. Before I left the church I had the words by heart. For long afterwards I felt an inner joy in murmuring them over. It was years before this feeling died away, but die away it did, and at last evaporated so completely that I can summon up no trace of it to-day. Yet many thousands, more fortunate than I, have had this feeling and have never lost it. For the hymn was "Rock of Ages."

Such stories are of interest in the study of the psychology of childhood; but it is not for this reason that I have told it here. It must be noted that the effect I have described was due to the words only, and in no way to the tune, which I had never heard. But this is not the case with any hymn that I can choose to-day. How should I regard "Lead, kindly Light" as a pure lyric, if I had never heard it sung? It is impossible to say. I shall

therefore have to take it as it stands, with the tune and verse so linked together as to form one single thing of beauty, when I select it as my favourite hymn.

VICTOR BRIDGES.

I shall never forget the joy which hymns gave me when I was a small boy, if only as a relief from the rest of the Sunday service. The two I loved best were " O God, our Help in ages past," and " Abide with me." There was a rolling majesty in the one and an exquisite peace about the other which almost intoxicated me with pleasure.

Others, which linger fragrantly in my memory, are " King of Saints, to Whom the number," " God moves in a mysterious way," " Lead, kindly Light," and " The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended."

If I were asked to say what I consider to be the most beautiful couplet in " Ancient and Modern," I should select the two lines of " I heard the voice of Jesus say " :

> And in that light of life I'll walk
> Till travelling days are done.

SIR ROBERT DONALD.

" Lead, kindly Light " is, I think, the finest hymn in the English language, because of the beauty of the words—soothing, moving, and at the same time inspiring—and the heartening touch of the tune. Although written by an Anglican when about to join the Roman Catholic Church, it is included in the hymnals of all denominations ; it is loved by men of every faith or of none. Unlike many popular hymns which, as regards style, will not bear analysis, it is beautiful poetry and good literature.

CLEMENCE DANE.

I think my favourite hymn is " While shepherds watch'd their flocks by night," but I should be hard put to it to tell you why.

SIDNEY DARK, Editor of " The Church Times."

Your question will be most easily answered by men and women who never go to church and whose memory of hymns dates from their nursery. It is obvious that those of us really familiar with hymns prefer one at one time and another at any other, according to mood

and occasion. It cannot, unhappily, be denied that the occasion is sometimes sentimentally fitted by literary monstrosities, but on the whole the English Hymnal, for which scholars of the calibre of Dr. Percy Dearmer were responsible, is a collection which could safely be submitted to the judgment of the equipped literary critic. For my own personal choice of hymns, I should select, with some hesitation, Newman's " Lead, kindly Light," and " Praise to the Holiest in the height," which is, of course, found in " The Dream of Gerontius."

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